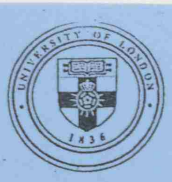

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Textual Fragmentation as a Response to Time in Russian Modernist Prose after the Revolution

Timothy Martin James Sykes

University College London

Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

ProQuest LLC
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

Abstract

The starting point of this thesis is the hitherto under-explored relationship between Russian apocalypticism and formal fragmentation in Russian literary modernism, both prominent in an early twentieth-century climate of heightened religiosity and aestheticism. The project borrows Joseph Frank's theory of 'spatial form', which demonstrates how a text's temporal coordinate is suppressed by disruption of order, and postulates that this technique stems from the modern mood of existential crisis, attracted to the otherworldly and timeless. This analysis encounters more concrete resonances when applied to the eschatological perceptions of time and aspirations for religious experience via art in contemporary Russia.

The project focuses on post-Revolutionary prose, taking Babel''s *Konarmiia*, Platonov's *Chevengur* and Zoshchenko's *Pered voskhodom solntsa* as case studies. Given that the Revolution was widely depicted as an apocalyptic end, the subsequent 'post-apocalyptic' condition raises narratological and philosophical problems for texts, such as these, that engage with inherited, transformative models. Although the eschatological paradigm continues to play a crucial part in understanding the Revolution, it is inevitably affected by the passage of the purported End from future into past, as well as by the need to incorporate an atheistic twist into a myth deeply rooted in Orthodox Christian traditions.

Such redefinitions of the apocalyptic paradigm can also be manifested in textual fragmentation. In this context the project draws on Frank Kermode's description of how increased non-linearity in narrative structures reflects a rise in the complexity of experience and scepticism toward the biblically-derived narrative, with an absolute beginning and end. Kermode thus offers an alternative to Frank's theory. Together, the two provide a framework for exploring the extents to which the collision of Russian messianism with the Revolution is experienced by modernist writers as a transcendent moment of timelessness, or a stimulus to deconstruct the paradigm.

Contents

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Finally, I could neither have undertaken nor completed this project without the unfailing emotional, and often practical, support provided by my sister Ginny (who put a roof over my head for the first six months), my brother Tom, and above all my parents and wife Liliya. I am deeply grateful for their love and patience.

Chapter One – Introduction

This thesis is concerned with perceptions of and attitudes toward time in Russian modernist prose of the 1920s and 1930s, and specifically with how these are reflected in the structural and stylistic properties of a text. These questions are illuminated by two principal contexts: Western-based theories about the significance of time for modernist literary form, and the particular experience of time in Russia during its modernist period.

This introductory chapter, proceeding from the general to the specific, will begin by setting out ways in which modernism responds to an altered relationship to time and existing theories about time in modernist literature. The second section will address the uniqueness of the Russian situation and the eschatological paradigms inherited by the post-Revolutionary generation of writers. The third section will outline the specific aims of this project, and section four will introduce the texts selected for detailed study: Isaak Babel''s *Konarmiia* [*Red Cavalry*], Andrei Platonov's *Chevengur* and Mikhail Zoshchenko's *Pered voskhodom solntsa* [*Before Sunrise*].

Modernism and Time

The modernist period has bequeathed a trove of material for studies of the extent to which literary form reflects or represents perceptions of time. The age witnessed a great deal of philosophical and cultural interest in time and reconsiderations of mankind's relationship to it. As Ronald Schleifer writes, quoting Daniel Bell: '"the problem of time (in Bergson, Proust, and Joyce) was the primary aesthetic problem of the first decades of this century." Insofar as we look at the problem in Dickens, Eliot or Austen, it is because we have been tutored by literary Modernity.'[1]

Modern Ideas about Time

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there arose redefinitions of time and new perspectives upon it. Stephen Kern has found that during the period 'there was a sharp rise in the quantity of literature about time, and contemporary

[1] Ronald Schleifer, *Modernism and Time: The Logic of Abundance in Literature, Science and Culture, 1880-1930* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 68.

observers thought that this was of historical significance'.[2] Absolute, Newtonian time was assaulted by Einstein's special and general theories of relativity (of 1905 and 1916). Einstein popularized his new mechanics as the replacement of a single clock with 'as many clocks as we like'.[3] Emile Durkheim investigated the social origins of time in *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1912), and came to believe in the social relativity of time, whose rhythms are expressed and regulated by calendars. Psychiatrists such as Karl Jaspers noted the relativity of time as experienced by patients, and outlined different modes of perceiving time and space during mental illness.[4] Freud explored the timeless landscape of the unconscious mind and described the temporal discontinuities of dreams. Philosophers such as Henri Bergson and Edmund Husserl sought to understand time through consciousness. Meanwhile, there was growing interest in time as a cultural construct: in the sacred and magic time of myth and the primitive.

These challenges to the conception of time as a homogeneously flowing backdrop to events were concurrent with a radical re-evaluation of the idea of history. As Stephen Toumlin and June Goodfield write, the previous century had been a 'period marked by the growth of a new, dynamic world-picture. <...> Whether we consider geology, zoology, political philosophy or the study of ancient civilizations, the nineteenth century was in every case the Century of History.'[5] Darwin, Hegel, Marx and others proposed accounts of a world developing – progressing – linearly and could explain the present as the latest point in that process. During the modernist era there were reactions against the historicist assumptions of the preceding century. The increasingly evident imperfections of the present age cast doubt upon the notion that this was the peak or a higher stage of historical development. Furthermore, apart from scepticism about the veracity of historicist claims, there was an erosion of desire to be defined according to them. Kern notes that because the great historicist systems showed how individuals or social forms had evolved out of their antecedents:

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[2] Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space: 1880-1918* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 33.
[3] Ibid., p. 19.
[4] See ibid., pp. 19-20.
[5] Stephen Toumlin and June Goodfield, *The Discovery of Time* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 232.

> the present thus seemed predetermined and smothered by the past. <...> Many artists and intellectuals were sharply critical of this overbearing historicism and shared a fear that the dominion of the past would impoverish response to the present and dry up resources for the future.[6]

Hayden White asserts that in the decade before the First World War 'hostility towards the historical consciousness and the historian gained wide currency among intellectuals in every country of Western Europe'.[7]

From our perspective it is common to see the crisis of historicism, as well as the relativization of the concept of time itself, in the context of the collapse of religious belief within intellectual elites. Belief in God as Creator and ruler over time had provided the solid ground of absolute meaning. Time existed in order to flow from the beginning until the end, and these biblical coordinates also endowed history with purpose. The historicist systems threatened religion because they secularized the Judeo-Christian view of time; however, if God was not required by historicist systems, he could still be co-opted into them as a guiding *Geist*. Indeed, doing so nurtured optimism within historicisms: the presence of God guaranteed the system a benign end, or made it possible to argue that the current species or institutions represented the culmination of all time. Yet in a mood of religious doubt, the deterministic aspects of historicism lacked any compensating sense of fundamental meaning. In his essay 'Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben' ['On the Use and Abuse of History for Life'], published 1874, Nietzsche (both the first great explorer of a post-religious existential landscape and the first great critic of historicism) attacks 'antiquarian' brands of history which invest excessive value in the past, leading to creative sterility in the present.

> Die historische Bildung ist auch wirklich eine Art angeborner Grauhaarigkeit, und die, welche ihr Zeichen von Kindheit her an sich tragen, müssen wohl zu dem instinktiven Glauben vom Alter der Menschheit gelangen.[8]
> [Historical culture is truly a kind of congenital grey-hairedness, and those who bear its mark from childhood on must come to instinctively believe in the old age of humanity.]

Breaking from this 'grey-haired condition' left behind a vacuum of meaning, just as other emancipations of modernity were accompanied by existential uncertainty. Some sought to fill the void by exploring pagan, cyclical worldviews, which, not

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[6] Kern, p. 61.
[7] Hayden White, 'The Burden of History', *History and Theory*, 5 (1966), 111-34 (p. 119).
[8] Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben' from 'Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen', in his *Werke in Drei Bänden*, (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1960), I, 209-85 (p. 258).

defined by historical narrative, supposedly had a more fulfilling relationship with the present. Nietzsche, for instance, toyed with the myth of Eternal Recurrence.[9] D.H. Lawrence, in *Apocalypse* (1931), holds up the ancient Etruscans and Chaldeans as exemplars of sensual, aesthetic enjoyment of the earth in the here-and-now, as against a Judeo-Christian renunciation of this world in anticipation of a better one. The significance of the present and the instant, or the 'quick moment of time' in Lawrence's words, was elevated in modernism.[10]

This detachment of the present moment also involves a dichotomy: it can be a disintegration of one's understanding of time as well as a liberation from the past. Paul de Man states in this context that 'modernity invests its trust in the power of the present moment as an origin, but discovers that, in severing itself from the past, it has at the same time severed itself from the present.'[11] Time and history as they had been generally understood threatened to dissolve into flux. The fragment is celebrated in a great deal of modern art not solely due to the recognition that it has previously been neglected, but partly because the atom is the most reliable unit in the absence of a coherent meta-pattern.

Experience of Time

The shifting perceptions of time in modernity did not occur in isolated realms of philosophy and scientific enquiry, but were complemented and informed by experiential changes related to bursts in urbanization, technological innovation and industrialization. The sheer rapidity of these changes rendered the present tangibly different from the past of living memory. Mechanized transport drastically cut the duration of journeys, and thereby reduced the temporal barrier between points in space. People were aware of the accelerated pace of modern life; some abhorred it, while various avant-gardes celebrated it. The French novelist Octave Mirhour wrote in 1908 that 'Everywhere life is rushing insanely like a cavalry charge, and it

[9] An excellent discussion of Nietzsche's attraction toward an aesthetic engagement with cyclical time in the context of his dissatisfaction with historicism can be found in Matthew Rampley, 'Memory, History and Eternal Recurrence: The Aesthetics of Time', in his *Nietzsche, Aesthetics and Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 135-65.
[10] See D.H. Lawrence, 'Morality and the Novel', in his *Study of Thomas Hardy and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 171-76 (p. 171).
[11] Paul De Man, *Blindness and Insight* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 149.

vanishes cinematographically like trees and silhouettes along a road. Everything around man jumps, dances, gallops in a movement out of phase with his own.'[12]

Advances in telecommunications increased the quantity of information about the present that could be accumulated, and growing urban populations provided an expanding market for newspapers, which thanks to technology could disseminate this information faster and to a far greater number of readers than before. Kern records that one critic bemoaned the impossibility of taking in all this information, while Paul Claudel boasted in 1904 that the morning newspaper gives us a sense of 'the present in its totality'.[13]

Schleifer's book *Modernism and Time* emphasizes a substantial increase in phenomena: in information, new and diverse fields of understanding and research, the quantity of manufactured goods, and the range of experiences, encounters and coincidences to be had in modern, mechanized metropolises. Schleifer argues that these helped shape a 'logic of abundance', which he traces in economic theory and mathematics as well as cultural-philosophical spheres. Abundances 'disrupted settled notions and experience of time', essentially by pluralizing them.[14] The enormous wealth of parallel (simultaneous) data gave rise to a chaos that could only be ordered by constructing patterns and identifying relationships that resisted the uniform stream of the Newtonian time at the basis of Enlightenment thought.

If the present was multiplied by the plenitude of phenomenal and informational encounters, then a similar increase in publishing capacity also expanded the accessible past to an unprecedented level. In the first volume of his *The Psychology of Art* (1947-49), André Malraux explores the idea that modern man has created an 'imaginary museum' for himself through the technical perfection of art reproduction.[15] Malraux suggests that this places man in a different relationship to art than that of preceding generations, being confronted for the first time with the entirety of preserved artistic expression. More broadly, this new perspective upon a 'whole' past refigured it as a static monolith, not flowing into the present, but

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[12] Kern, p. 113.
[13] Ibid., p. 70.
[14] Schleifer, p. 230.
[15] See Joseph Frank, *The Idea of Spatial Form* (New Brunswick, NJ, and London: Rutgers University Press, 1991), pp. 133-57.

related to it perpendicularly. (This impression could only be intensified by the decline of historicism.) Reflections of this view can be identified in the way disparate past narratives and art forms are radically and ironically re-processed by modernism, from James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) to Igor' Stravinskii's neo-classicism.

The multi-layered relationships of modernisms to time cannot, self-evidently, be discussed at all adequately in the first, contextualizing pages of a doctoral thesis. Yet this panoramic sketch has outlined a world in which perceptions of time became fraught with ambiguities and the chaos of abundance, and indeed, in which threats to existing understandings of time and history were central to a broader sense of existential uncertainty. It has also been suggested that all these factors contributed to a stronger emphasis upon the significance of the present moment.

Modernist Art and New Senses of Time

Modernist art is sensitive to these shifts in consciousness. Labels and genres of contemporary importance – 'modern', 'avant-garde', 'futurism', science fiction – reflect the self-conscious newness of an art-world striving to disassociate itself from the past. There is a heightened accent upon the fragment of time taken out of historical context in short fiction's preoccupation with what Horst Ruthrof terms 'boundary situations', temporally condensed situations of critical psychological importance.[16] In music motifs become shorter, and less emphasis is placed upon the linear development of a symphonic 'argument', as seen in the symphonies of Gustav Mahler and even more starkly in the works of Stravinskii and Anton Webern. Impressionist painting investigates the momentary qualities of light and form in nature, and the period also marks the watershed in which photography began to attract attention as an aesthetic medium rather than a scientific curiosity.

The visual arts also engaged with the present in its multiplicity and fragmentation. Cubists juxtaposed perspectives and diverse objects. The embryonic art of cinematic montage was particularly adept at suggesting simultaneity and at accomplishing light-footed leaps in time and space. A literary response to cubism and montage is poetic *simultanéisme*, which gathers together temporally and

[16] Horst Ruthrof, *The Reader's Construction of Narrative* (London: Routledge, 1981), pp. 102-08.

spatially remote images. Guillaume Apollinaire, the most famous practitioner of the method, created the hero Baron d'Ormesan – significantly, a film director – who possesses the technique of *toucher à distance*, enabling him to appear in different places at the same time. (He eventually dies simultaneously in 820 locations.)[17] Depictions of the city, one of the great themes of both modernist literature and painting, are structurally predisposed toward presenting *topos* above *chronos*. Joyce's depictions of Dublin and German expressionist cityscapes bring out the simultaneous and contiguous, yet heterogeneous, elements inherent in the subject. Another atemporal realm of contemporary importance is the unconscious mind, a repository of the past and present. Stream of consciousness prose imitates the grammarless and unregulated associations of the unconscious, and surrealism juxtaposes disparate images of memory and desire.

Timelessness in Modernist Prose: Joseph Frank

This thesis is specifically concerned with ways in which certain modernist prose styles, based on the juxtaposition of fragments, convey an attitude toward or perception of time. The centrality of the theme of time to the modernist experience has prompted scholars to investigate the way in which it shapes modernist art works, and consequently also to revisit questions about the broader relationship of literature to time. One such study is Joseph Frank's seminal essay 'Spatial Form in Modern Literature', first published in 1945, which will be a primary theoretical context underpinning this study.[18]

Frank proposes that modernist literature challenges the axioms expounded by Gotthold Lessing in *Laokoon oder Über die Grenzen der Malerei und Poesie* [*Laocoon, or On the Boundaries of Painting and Poetry*] (1766). Lessing had asserted that painting is bound to space, and literature to time. The components of meaning in literature unfold consecutively (rather like the flow of Newtonian time), whereas in a painting all elements are present simultaneously and are thus distributed spatially. Frank takes the Imagist aesthetic as a starting point to revise Lessing's designations. Ezra Pound defines his image as 'that which presents an

[17] See Kern, p. 74.
[18] Joseph Frank, 'Spatial Form in Modern Literature', in his *The Widening Gyre* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1963), pp. 3-62. This is the definitive revision of the 1945 essay.

intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time.'[19] T.S. Eliot expresses the idea in terms of psychological effect: 'the poetic sensibility has the quality of being able to fuse disparate experiences into new wholes'.[20] Implemented in Pound's *Cantos* and Eliot's *Waste Land*, their technique frustrates the reader's normal expectations of sequence. Fragments of course follow one-another in time (the time in which one reads the text) but are deliberately disconnected, the meaning thus depending on a juxtaposition of temporally unrelated images. Frank suggests that such texts therefore function in space rather than in rolling time.

His essay proceeds to apply this idea to modernist prose, and takes *Madame Bovary* (1857), *Ulysses*, *A la recherche du temps perdu* (1913-27), and (the now less revered) *Nightwood* by Djuna Barnes (1937) as case studies. Frank notes that the novel has a 'larger unit of meaning' than poetry, and consequently there may be a coherent temporal sequence within a unit. However, he maintains that the principle of disrupting time functions in the same manner when applied to narrative. Both fragmented poetry and prose 'can be properly understood only when their units of meaning are apprehended reflexively in an instance of time.'[21] For example, Gustave Flaubert's celebrated country fair scene 'cinematographically' cuts between adjacent but separate levels of action. Interspersing Rodolphe's seduction with the announcements of agricultural prizes outside, Flaubert achieves an impression of simultaneity, wherein the different strata portray a totality of action within a certain space and time.

Frank identifies the same technique in Joyce's epic, though executed more radically and upon a gigantic scale. Joyce's depiction of Dublin as a whole in a brief slice of time is constructed from a 'vast number of references and cross-references which relate to each other independent of the time scale', and the book cannot fit into a meaningful pattern without the reader connecting them.[22] By reconstructing the fragments of the whole, the reader can create a total picture of Dublin and the

[19] Ibid., p. 9.
[20] Ibid., p. 10.
[21] Ibid., pp. 14-16 (p. 16).
[22] Ibid., p. 16.

interrelationships of the protagonists. This is an innately retrospective process: as Frank puts it, *Ulysses* 'can only be re-read'.[23]

Marcel Proust's great novel is also marked by discontinuities: characters disappear and turn up hundreds of pages later, changed by the passage of time. They are thus 'seen in a series of motionless snapshots'.[24] At moments of collision between the 'stills' of memory and present stimuli the sort of meta-pattern seen in the other examples crystallizes. For instance, the scene of the Princesse de Guermantes' reception places the narrator among familiar faces after several years in a sanatorium. The juxtaposition of memory and present experience results in a disjunction of sameness and change (in rank and the wearing of new masks).[25] In stamping the form of subjectively perceived time onto the novel, Proust creates 'a "pure time" of past and present together [and] creates a perception in a moment of time, that is, space.'[26] The closing pages of *Le Temps retrouvé* encourage such a response. Proust writes that memory, 'when it introduces the past, unmodified, into the present – the past just as it was at the moment when it was itself the present – suppresses the mighty dimension of Time.'[27]

According to Frank's theory, fragmented texts, in which narrative or thematic relationships are not revealed by the unfolding structure, rely upon a retrospective contemplation in order to reconstruct meaningful patterns. Although it must be read in time along its preordained sequence, the text can be termed 'spatial' because it disrupts the order of things as we are accustomed to experiencing them in time. At the most radical level, this is the temporal order of language as decreed by the laws of grammar; on a narrative level the disruption of the order of events suppresses the element of time in the represented world. Such a text is also 'spatial' in the sense that the crucial 'second reading' of the whole work (or section) is a perspective upon a fixed, complete object. One holds and examines *Ulysses* in one's mind in the same way that one regards a painting. Its whole is thus theoretically accessible in an

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[23] Ibid., p. 19. Indeed, Kern records that 'Joyce hoped his readers would go back to the book many times, continually building up the network of cross-references scattered throughout until Dublin came to life' and observes that *Dubliners* is similar in conception. Kern, p. 77.
[24] Ibid., p. 24.
[25] Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*, trans. by S. Moncrieff et al., 3 vols (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), III, 960 onward.
[26] Frank, 'Spatial Form', p. 24.
[27] Proust, III, 1087.

instant (although in reality we require innumerable instants in order to do it justice, as we would when regarding a complex painting). Of course, it is also possible to hold the totality of a realist novel in the mind's eye, but such an instantaneous view would not grant the special insight it does of a spatial text.

Frank interprets this preference for space over time in the context of the existential anxieties of the day. He adapts the ideas of Wilhelm Worringer, whose doctoral thesis *Abstraktion und Einfühlung* [*Abstraction and Empathy*] of 1908 became one of the key accounts (and vindications) of non-naturalism in the visual arts to appear in the modernist period.[28] Drawing upon the art of disparate epochs and cultures, Worringer's psychology of style has a scope perhaps unimaginable before the emergence of Malraux's 'imaginary museum'. The author postulates that all art responds to the spiritual needs of its environment. Thus naturalistic styles reflect a sense of harmony with and confidence in nature: satisfaction is taken in representation of the surrounding world. Conversely, societies caught in a disequilibrium between man and the cosmos have very different spiritual requirements of art and seek to establish order in non-organic, linear-geometric styles. This explains the two-dimensional quality of art dominated, for example, by the primitive fear of nature's chaos or by the Byzantine church's rejection of the natural world as a realm of evil.

Subtextual to *Abstraction and Empathy* are the correspondences between such earlier styles and the new art of the early twentieth century, and between that notion of 'disequilibrium' and contemporary mankind's feelings of alienation from nature. This is especially pertinent to the question of the modern relationship with time. Worringer asserts that three-dimensional naturalism brings objects together and thus gives them a time value, because it places them in the real world where things happen. Non-naturalism escapes from flux by suppressing the referential framework created by the third dimension.[29]

Frank suggests that an analogous aspiration lies behind the advent of spatial form in modernist literature. 'Ever since the Renaissance, modern man has cultivated both

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[28] Wilhelm Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, trans. by M. Bullock (New York: International Universities Press, 1953, repr. 1980).
[29] Frank, 'Spatial Form', pp. 56-57.

the objective visual imagination (the ability to portray space) and the objective historical imagination (the ability to apprehend chronological time); both have now been abandoned.' He places the spatial style in the context of Mircea Eliade's characterization of modern thought as a '"resistance to history, a revolt against historical time, an attempt to restore this historical time, freighted as it is with human experience, to a place in the time that is cosmic, cyclical, and infinite <...> The work of two of the most significant writers of our day – T.S. Eliot and James Joyce – is saturated with nostalgia for the myth of eternal repetition and, in the last analysis, for the abolition of time."'[30] Frank asserts that time in the discussed works is no longer felt as an objective, causal progression with clearly marked-out differences between periods; rather, it becomes a continuum without distinctions between past and present. The dimension of historical depth has vanished from the content of the major works of modern literature.[31] Instead, past and present are 'locked in a timeless unity that, while it may accentuate surface differences, eliminates any feeling of sequence by the very act of juxtaposition.'[32]

Allen Tate describes Pound's *Cantos* as 'powerful juxtapositions of the ancient, the Renaissance, and the modern worlds [reducing] all three elements to an unhistorical miscellany, timeless and without origin.'[33] Stephen Dedalus, the artist still as a young man, speaks for the anti-historicist context of *Ulysses*:

> – History, Stephen said, is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake.[34]

Stephen's remark sounds like a retort to the schoolmaster's complacently portentous assertion, which is in fact (and perhaps appropriately) subsequent:

> – All history moves toward one great goal, the manifestation of God.

Later on Stephen, oppressed by the burden of history and time, extinguishes the light by destroying the brothel chandelier, and thereby symbolically defeats time: 'Time's livid final flame leaps and in the following darkness, ruin of all space,

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[30] Ibid., p. 60. These themes are explored in some depth in Mircea Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return* (New York: Bollingen, 1954).
[31] It is interesting to note that the rejection of modernism by Marxist critics such as Georg Lukács rests precisely on this loss of historical perspective.
[32] Frank, 'Spatial Form', p. 59.
[33] Ibid., p. 59.
[34] James Joyce, *Ulysses* (London: Penguin, 1992), p. 42.

shattered glass and toppling masonry.'[35] This symbolic victory over time is climactic in the process of Stephen's self-realization as an artist.

Proust also provides thematic support for Frank's theory. As the narrator makes explicit only toward the end of his giant undertaking, the preceding work of art is both a monument to his personal conquest of time and the means by which he achieved it. The spatial textures of the novel construct an extra-temporal perspective intended to penetrate an essential, Platonic reality. 'He grasped a reality "real without being of the present moment, ideal but not abstract." Only in these moments did he attain his most cherished ambition – "to seize, isolate, immobilize for the duration of a lightning flash" what otherwise he could not apprehend, "namely: a fragment of time in its pure state."'[36] These quasi-mystical experiences moreover serve to soothe existential despair. Frank continues: 'for a person experiencing this moment, Proust adds, the word "death" no longer has any meaning. "Situated outside the scope of time, what could he fear from the future?"'

'Spatial Form in Modern Literature' therefore posits that the effect of 'timelessness' it has described is a method to aesthetically 'transcend' the time-related anxieties of modernity. As a result, it is a particularly persuasive analytical tool when applied to texts which seek a remnant of mystical experience in the absence of religiosity. Proust's quest with its moments of revelation is a good example, as is Joyce, with particular regard to his concept of epiphany. The climactic epiphany in 'The Dead', the last story in *Dubliners* (1914), demonstrates the potentially revelatory effect of a perspective that instantaneously views the whole text. (One could argue that it is not until this moment that the story, a product of a younger and less radically experimental Joyce, reveals its spatial aspect.) Gabriel's mind provides the space for reflexion on the previous elements of the narrative. The conjunction of impressions of the party from which he has returned (including his formulaic and slightly pompous speech) and the revelation of his wife's long-secret sorrow jolts him into a state of emotionally heightened self-insight.

[35] Ibid., p. 683.
[36] Frank, 'Spatial Form', p. 21.

Frank's theory has collected numerous followers and prompted various derivative investigations.[37] It has also attracted critics, such as Michael Hollington, who objects that 'in its cruder forms the idea tends to suggest that Modernism escaped the tyranny of logical sequence in order to embrace the tyranny of "spatial form". For me the keynote of Modernism is liberation, an ironic distrust of all absolutes, including those of temporal or spatial form.'[38] Another scholar critical of 'spatialism' is Frank Kermode, whose ideas set out in *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* form a second major theoretical context to this project.[39]

Frank Kermode: The Sense of an Ending

Kermode shares Joseph Frank's assumption that literary form and specifically the structural organization of texts are moulded by fundamental perceptions of existence. Therefore, his reading of modernism is informed by the same ferment of dislocations, anxieties and challenges to received systems of thought. However, where Frank views the style and structure of the great modernist novels as a means to impose order or transcend flux, for Kermode those texts, at their best, help dismantle myths of time that had underscored pre-modern certainties and ironize the apocalyptic atmosphere of their period (despite being influenced by it).

Kermode's scope encompasses the Western mind from Augustine to the 1960s, charting the influence of the biblical 'plot', and especially its ending, upon secular understandings and narratives of time.[40] Written two decades after 'Spatial Form', *The Sense of an Ending* belongs to an intellectual milieu more alert to the dangers of grand narratives, and therefore more conscious of resistance to them. Kermode observes a broad sophistication of eschatological and historical thought. Our fictions (and above all the novel) – secular versions of The Book – play a significant role in testing out the conventional forms of myth, by integrating into the

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[37] See, for example, *Spatial Form in Narrative*, ed. by J. R. Smitten and A. Daghistany, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1981), a compilation of essays from the Joseph Frank school.
[38] Michael Hollington, 'Svevo, Joyce and Modernist Time', in *Modernism 1890-1930*, ed. by Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (London: Penguin, 1976), pp. 430-42 (p. 432).
[39] Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967).
[40] The need to maintain focus on the present subject matter necessitates passing over some of Kermode's broader concerns and the intricacies of those arguments that are not directly related to this thesis.

historical plot an ever broader, more disparate and complex reality. Narratives, he suggests, have loosened their reliance upon structures moving from a beginning to an end in response to a wider erosion of the literal apprehension of the biblical story of the world from Genesis to Revelation (as well as equivalent ideas about historical resolution). 'On the whole there is a correlation between subtlety and variety in our fictions and remoteness and doubtfulness about ends and origins.'[41]

However, the powerful idea of the End does not disappear from our imaginations, and the need for crises and points of resolution to furnish the present with meaning proves enduring. Because of the remoteness of ends, future apocalyptic resolution is reinvested in the present. Although 'the End has perhaps lost its naïve *imminence*, its shadow still lies on the crises of our fictions; we may speak of it as *immanent*'.[42] Increasingly, the present as 'time-between' comes to mean not the time between one's moment and the Second Coming, but between one's moment and one's death. This throws the weight of 'End-feeling' onto the moment – and the narrative's 'sense of an ending' into the middle.[43] 'And of course we have it now, the sense of an ending. It has not diminished, and is as endemic to what we call modernism as apocalyptic utopianism is to political revolution.'[44]

Modernism manifests Kermode's themes with particular intensity, its schismatic relationship to the past being informed by crisis myths, but also involving an unprecedented complexity of experience and a questioning of established paradigms. Its *fin de siècle* sensibility is reinforced by the cataclysmic changes in thought, science, the visage of the urban world and quotidian experience. The collapse of religious faith contributes to the rejection of the idea that we are proceeding toward a meaningful end. Modernist apocalypticism is thus related to the existential catastrophe of confronting transience and death without the comfort of purer forms of the apocalypse myth, which brought meaning to time.

Therefore, according to Kermode, the complex, fragmented construction of High-Modernist texts is indicative of an atmosphere at once potently immanent-apocalyptic and ironic in its treatment of the myth. A Kermodian interpretation of

[41] Kermode, p. 67.
[42] Ibid., p. 6.
[43] Ibid., p. 25.
[44] Ibid., p. 98.

such texts does not deny Frank's insight that the juxtaposition of fragments erodes linear direction and consequently suppresses the dimension of time within it. However, it diverges from the spatial theory by emphasizing how this pattern reflects an existential condition in which, bereft of meaningful origins and endings, we are forced to deal with the present and the existential disorientation this causes. The 'timelessness' of modernist texts might in this sense be equated with a repudiation of closure.

Consequently, in *Ulysses* (that battlefield for theorists of modernism) Kermode stresses the way in which Joyce 'develops the tension between paradigm and reality, asserts the resistance of fact to fiction, human freedom and unpredictability against plot. Joyce chooses a Day; it is a crisis ironically treated. The day is full of randomness.'[45] His partisan Hollington concurs. He declines to read the novel's mythic features and suggestions of cyclical return at face value:

> It is thoroughly Modernist in its ironic, relativistic sense of the ways in which we shape our existence into meaningful temporal patterns, give it manageable shape. Its vision is essentially comic, its aim to exorcise the enslaving structures language imposes upon existence.[46]

Kermode takes Robert Musil's *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften* [*The Man Without Qualities*] (1930-43) as a prime example of lost belief in narrative order. Musil's novel is 'multidimensional, fragmentary, without the possibility of a narrative end <...> because "everything has now become non-narrative." The illusion would be too gross and absurd.' For Musil was 'prepared to spend most of his life struggling with the problems created by the divergence of comfortable story and the non-narrative contingencies of modern reality.'[47]

Frank versus Kermode

Therefore, where Frank's spatial theory conceives of modernism as escaping or transcending the modern experience, *The Sense of an Ending* draws upon its converse proclivity to reveal the polyphonic complexity of reality. However, this tangible difference need not be considered fundamental.

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[45] Ibid., p. 113.
[46] Hollington, p. 442.
[47] Kermode, pp. 127-28.

Kermode exaggerates the incompatibility of his views with Frank's, partly because the intention of his book is not merely descriptive. His polemical attitude toward spatialism is infused with his antagonism toward 'mythical thinking': irresponsible simplification of complex reality. Kermode advocates what Paul Tillich terms 'living in conditions of reality unprotected by myth' and the mood of 'demythologized apocalypse' in Sartre.[48] Correspondingly, he rejects the spatial theory on the grounds that it is 'a critical fiction which has regressed into a myth because it was not discarded at the right moment'.[49] This is not necessarily to claim that Frank's analysis is incorrect. Indeed, Kermode castigates modernism for its 'dangerous lapses into mythical thinking' and associates Worringer's abstraction with the authoritarian and fascistic tendencies of Wyndham Lewis, Pound and Italian Futurism.[50]

Since *The Sense of an Ending* presents the modernist novel as existing in a 'narrative middle' (having ceased to believe in a beginning and an end), it shares Frank's observation of a lessened sense of linear time. Given this correlation, it is not hard to envisage a qualified attitude located between the purely ironic and purely transcendental possibilities of the non-linear text. Equally, a particular text could straddle the Kermode-Frank boundary. Apart from that, there is the obvious point that myriad modernisms have various and contrasting agendas.

A more recent contributor to scholarship on time in modernism, Ronald Schleifer allows for both tendencies. His aforementioned study, which documents the encroachment of multiplicity into perceptions of time in philosophy and art, recognizes that the deconstruction of absolutes may be concomitant with a redeeming sense of timelessness. Schleifer comments that 'in Conrad as well as Yeats, in Joyce as well as T.S. Eliot, there is a sense of arrested time – aesthetic time – captured in discourse reduced to image.'[51] His stance owes much to the acknowledged influence of Walter Benjamin, whose writings also demonstrate the capacity for both critical engagement and a sense of the transcendent to inform the response to modern vistas of time. Writing within modernism, Benjamin's mélange

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[48] Ibid., 132, 133.
[49] Ibid., p. 52.
[50] Ibid., p. 103.
[51] Schleifer, p. 6.

of Jewish messianism, Marxism and a critique of historicism helps foster a remarkable sensitivity toward the ambivalence inherent in a 'constellation' of data:

> It isn't that the past casts its light on the present or the present casts its light on the past: rather, an image is that in which the Then [das Gewesene] and the Now [das Jetzt] come into a constellation like a flash of lightning. In other words: image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of the Then to the Now is dialectical – not development but image leaping forth.[52]

While Benjamin is profoundly conscious of the ethical and political implications of this relationship to time, the experience of this dialectics is conveyed using the language of revelation ('flash of lightning', 'leaping forth'). This serves to further illustrate the possibility of a middle ground between Frank and Kermode, or rather the potential for the conflicting impulses they describe to overlap.

To conclude the first section, two distinct currents have been identified in the modernist fragmentation of Lessing's time-bound text. Yet it is doubtful how far we can separate the tendency to emphasize complexity and the dissolution of absolutes from that which aesthetically suspends and overcomes time. This dichotomy hovers over the relationship between the technical qualities of a text and its author's existential attitudes, which is to be explored in this project, and applied to more concrete and localized issues.

Modernism in Russia

Russian modernism after 1917 provides a particularly interesting case for the study of how perceptions of time are reflected in literary structure and style. This is firstly due to the fact that modernism in Russia arose amid a thriving apocalyptic tradition, generating a distinct sense of time. Secondly, Russia's uniquely cataclysmic historical experience over the period, culminating in revolution and civil war, was widely interpreted within the framework of those messianic expectations. This section will discuss how and to what extent Russian perceptions of time differed from contemporary Western experience, and in this context what questions are raised by the Revolution.

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[52] Walter Benjamin, 'N [Re: the Theory of Knowledge, Theory of Progress]', in *Benjamin: Philosophy, Aesthetics, History*, ed. by Gary Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 43-83 (p. 49).

Time and the First Generation of Russian Modernism

One should guard against overstating the uniqueness of Russia. Many of the general changes associated with the emergence of mass society, described in the previous section, also occur in Russia. During the decades either side of the turn of the century there was a sharp growth in urban populations and industrial activity, introducing the crowded, abundant, accelerated urban experience at least to a segment of Russians. The theme of the city, with its incongruous juxtapositions, became prominent in the arts. That 'imaginary museum' of the whole cultural past was facilitated by the publication of series such as 'The Library of Great Writers' and 'Monuments of World Literature' during the first decade of the twentieth century.[53] Futurist manifestos make it clear that for some the weight of tradition was something that needed to be cast off the steamship of modernity ['Бросить Пушкина, Достоевского, Толстого и проч. и проч. с Парохода современности'], although retrospect reveals that Futurists actually absorbed more from the sinking classics than they liked to admit.[54] Russian Cubo-Futurist artists and poets, clearly related to the Parisian cubist scene, experimented with fragmentation and multiplication of perspective. Meanwhile, in parallel with the West, the concept of time itself was investigated and challenged. Kern notes that the Bolshevik philosopher Aleksandr Bogdanov 'argued for social relativity in all categories of experience in *Empirio-monism* (1904-06)' and wrote that time, like space, is 'a form of social coordination of the experiences of different people'.[55]

However, these comparatively recognizable and 'translatable' features – an increasingly diverse and polyphonic experience of the present, a coagulation of the past, relativizations of Newtonian time – exist among specifically Russian currents, which often push against the general narrative of modernity.

Inasmuch as it did encounter some of the same factors as the West, Russia nevertheless experienced them differently. Its modernization was more rapid and

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[53] See Pamela Davidson, *The Poetic Imagination of Vyacheslav Ivanov: A Russian Symbolist's Perception of Dante* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 229-30.
[54] D. Burliuk, A. Kruchenykh, V. Maiakovskii and V. Khlebnikov, 'Poshchechina obshchestvennomu vkusu', in their *Poshchechina obshchestvennomu vkusu* (Moscow: Kuz'min, 1912), p. 3.
[55] Kern, p. 135. Kern goes on to mention the work of the Russian physiologist Elie de Cyon, which also accentuates the role of individual perception in 'constructing' time. Cyon claimed in 1908 to have discovered that our sense of time is rooted in the semicircular canals of the ear.

more sudden. Whereas Schleifer brackets the modernist period with that of the 'second industrial revolution' in Western Europe, the same time span for agrarian Russia was substantially the first. Concurrent with explosions in urbanization and industrialization were enormous political changes. Over the fifty-six years following the abolition of serfdom in 1861 a feudal, absolutist monarchy metamorphosed into an atheistic republic. This was accompanied by considerable social turmoil, regicide, SR terrorism, state repression, a revolution in 1905, military defeat to Japan, the immeasurable sufferings of the First World War, and the revolutions of 1917, themselves preludes to a sustained civil war. Russia's experience of the cataclysmic face of modernity – the anxious transition of epochs – was thus in many respects more intense than those of the West.

Perhaps partly due to its rushed advent, modernist paradigms occurred in a cultural context more dominated by religious discourse than we find among the West's intellectual elite of the same period. Therefore, the reception of imported modernist ideas and the treatment of issues indigenously raised by comparable 'modern phenomena' were to a considerable extent defined by this spiritual disposition. More specifically, the epoch's intuitions of renewal and chaos resonated with Russia's long-standing eschatological tradition. Given the vast scale of this subject and the present spatial constraints, the following account cannot aspire to be comprehensive, but merely to portray how key ideas evolved.[56]

Russian Apocalypticism

Russia's messianic consciousness, deeply rooted in religious tradition and folklore, has tended to interpret great national events through the paradigm of the Apocalypse. Moscow has been held to be the Third Rome and St. Petersburg – Babylon; Peter the Great, religious schismatics, and peasant revolts have all been painted onto the canvas of Russia's millenarian self-image. Emerging from that tradition, Russian messianism of the nineteenth century foretold that the nation was due to rise above all others from its erstwhile backwardness. The notion of Russia's messianic status was sustained by a lingering awareness of having not yet reached

[56] For fuller discussions of eschatological traditions in Russian culture see Nikolai Berdiaev, 'Russkaia ideia', in his *Samopoznanie*, ed. by M.A. Bliumenkrants (Moscow: Eksmo, 2001), pp. 11-247, and the introductory chapter in David Bethea, *The Shape of Apocalypse in Modern Russian Fiction* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 1-60.

cultural ripeness and, secondly, by its pivotal situation between the spiritual East and rational West.

An influential text in this discourse is Petr Chaadaev's 'Apologiia sumasshedshego' ['Apology of a Madman'], written in 1837. Chaadaev had been declared insane for speaking (in the *Filosoficheskie pis'ma* [*Philosophical Letters*]) of Russia's lack of a (cultural) history and failure to contribute any new idea to the world, in view of which, he suggests, Russia has a great deal to learn from Western Europe.[57] His notion of a void prepares the ground for the 'Apology' to suggest that the nation's empty past bestows it with a uniquely open future and, thanks to the special qualities of the Russian people, the opportunity to surpass the West while avoiding its historical errors. In the following passage he accepts his own mistakes:

> Было преувеличением не признать того, что мы родились на почве, не вспаханной и не оплодотворенной предшествующими поколениями, где ничто не говорило нам о протекших веках, где не было никаких задатков нового мира; было преувеличением не воздать должного этой церкви, столь смиренной, иногда столь героической, которая одна утешает за пустоту наших летописей.[58]
> [It was an exaggeration not to acknowledge that we were born on a soil which had not been ploughed and fecundated by preceding generations, where nothing told us about ages past and where there were no inclinations of a new world; it was an exaggeration not to give the Church its due, which is so humble, sometimes so heroic, which alone provides comfort for the emptiness of our chronicles.]

Such ideas feed into Orthodox messianism and later, at another extreme, into revolutionary apocalypticism (we can think of the Leninist programme of implementing communism without first passing through developed bourgeois capitalism). From the 1840s onwards similar concepts emerge in Slavophile claims that the Russians' Christian meekness distinguishes them as the anointed people – as well as accounting for their lack of cultural sophistication. The suffering, Christ-like Russia is destined to teach the world its form of Christianity. Fedor Dostoevskii's famous 'Pushkin speech' (1880) advances this view and, significantly, enlists Russian literature as a vehicle for the national idea:

> «Это нам-то предназначено в человечестве высказать новое слово?» <...> Я говорю лишь о братстве людей и о том, что ко всемирному, ко всечеловечески-братскому единению сердце русское, может быть, изо всех народов наиболее предназначено, вижу следы сего в нашей истории, в наших даровитых людях, в художественном гении Пушкина. Пусть наша земля нищая, но эту нищую

[57] See in particular the first philosophical letter (1829) in Petr Chaadaev, *Apologiia sumasshedshego*, ed. by S. Denisenko (St Petersburg: Azbuka-klassika, 2004), pp. 23-49.
[58] Ibid., p. 205.

землю «в рабском виде исходил благословляя» Христос. Почему же нам не вместить последнего слова его?[59]
['Is it not we among humanity who are destined to pronounce the new word?' <...> I speak only of the brotherhood of man and of the fact that perhaps the Russian heart among all peoples is the most suited to universal-brotherly unity; I see traces of this in our history, in our talented people, in the artistic genius of Pushkin. Let our land be destitute, but all over this destitute land 'with the appearance of a slave walked, blessing,' Christ. Why should we not be the carriers of his final word?]

Eschatological Sensibilities in Russian Modernism

Towards the end of the nineteenth century the writings of Vladimir Solov'ev extended existing ideas of Russia as the chosen vessel for God's last word and as a final synthesis of Orient and Occident, by placing greater emphasis upon the immediacy of the transcendent realm. Solov'ev describes his own mystical experiences (see, for instance, the poem 'Tri svidaniia' ['Three Meetings'] of 1898), and prophesies an imminent apocalyptic age (for example in the poem 'Panmongolizm' [Pan-Mongolism], 1894, and in *Tri razgovora o voine, progresse i kontse vsemirnoi istorii, so vkliucheniem kratkoi povesti ob Antikhriste* [*Three Conversations about War, Progress and the End of World History, with the inclusion of a short tale about the Antichrist*] of 1899).[60] Of greatest significance to this project is the fact that Solov'ev's writings place greater emphasis on art and beauty as a means to bring about a transformation of this world and achieve transcendence.

Совершенное искусство в своей окончательной задаче должно воплотить абсолютный идеал не в одном воображении, а и в самом деле <...>[61]
[Perfect art in its definitive mission must embody the absolute ideal not just in imagination, but also in reality <...>]

For his followers, including many among the first wave of Russian modernism, this claim lent special status to the activities of the writer, and especially the Poet. The Symbolists, the most influential literary grouping of the first decade of the twentieth century, strove to develop the transcendental aspirations of their father-figure Solov'ev. While their work registers 'modern' ambiguities and doubts, the writings of the 'younger' Symbolists, such as Viacheslav Ivanov, Aleksandr Blok and

[59] Fedor Dostoevskii, 'Pushkinskaia rech'', in his *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, ed. by V.G. Bazanov, 30 vols (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972-90), XXVI (1984), 129-49 (p. 149). The penultimate line paraphrases Fedor Tiutchev's 1855 poem 'Eti bednye selen'ia...' ['These poor settlements...'].
[60] Vladimir Solov'ev, *Smysl liubvi: Izbrannye proizvedeniia* (Moscow: Sovremennik, 1991), pp. 449-55, 443-44, 293-427.
[61] Ibid., pp. 69-84 (p. 84).

Andrei Belyi, also frequently reveal a sense of active participation in an apocalyptic epoch.

Solov'ev and Symbolism can be said to have contributed a latest evolution of the palimpsestic national Apocalypse. Having inherited from Chaadaev and Dostoevskii among many others a conception of Russia as a blank page – or history's last page – this aesthetic trend decided that it was the poet-prophet who would write upon that page and so become the agent of revelation. Whereas nineteenth-century messianic conceptions of the writer tended to fix upon his mission to reveal the Russian truth to the world, Symbolism opened up the possibility of making the aesthetic the vehicle for transcendence. This in turn engenders the idea of an apocalypse of perception: transforming the world by changing one's means of viewing it.

The combination of social strife, the cultural 'renaissance' of modernism and messianic traditions contributed to a looming sense of Russia entering a critical phase in its history, and thus to a distinct and acute experience of time. It is therefore important to keep in mind the role of apocalyptic discourse during Russia's first modernist experiments.

Influential figures for the next generation of modernists, Blok, Belyi and Aleksei Remizov (who did not identify with any movement but was close to the Symbolists) will receive more comprehensive discussion in the next chapter.[62] Not only does their work feature prominent apocalyptic themes, but analogies can be made with the spatial style. In addition to these three writers, many contemporary modernists also articulated eschatological ideas. Another Symbolist, Valerii Briusov, was one of several writers who associated the idea of Russia's Eastern qualities cleansing Europe (and cleansing itself of its excessive Europeanism) with historical memories of marauders from Asia. His poem 'Gde vy, griadushchie gunny' ['Where are you, approaching Huns'] (1905), for instance, echoes Solov'ev's 'Panmongolizm' as well as Viacheslav Ivanov's 'Kochevniki krasoty' ['Nomads of Beauty'] of the previous year, from which it takes its epigraph: 'Топчи их рай, Аттила' [Trample

[62] For more on Remizov's relationship to the Symbolists, see for example Greta N. Slobin, *Remizov's fictions, 1900-1921* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1991).

their Eden, Attila!].[63] Both Briusov and Ivanov use the image of cataclysmic destruction to greet Dionysian artistic-spiritual renewal.

Aside from Symbolism, many of these issues occur in Acmeist poetry, although they frequently exist in a more latent form. By contrast, the interest in eschatological paradigms and the poetics of transformation among more radical streams of Russian modernism is often relatively overt. (In this respect, the avant-garde betrays its debt to the Symbolists whom it often noisily dismisses.) As the name of the movement suggests, Futurism has a strong sense of the dawning of a new era. G.M. Hyde notes that Vladimir Maiakovskii described himself as both 'the loudmouthed Zarathustra of our day' and the Christ of Revelation.[64] The scandalous Futurist manifesto 'Poshchechina obshchestvennomu vkusu' ['A Slap in the Face of Public Taste'] of 1912 begins and ends with an emphasis on the qualitative break of the new from the old:

> Читающим наше Новое Первое Неожиданное.
> Только *мы – лицо нашего* Времени. Рог времени трубит нами в словесном искусстве.[65]
> [To the reader of our New First Unexpected.
> Only *we are the face of our* Time. The horn of time trumpets through us in literary art.]
>
> трепещут впервые Зарницы Новой Грядущей Самоценного (самовитого) Слова.
> [For the first time quivers the New Approaching lightning of the autonomous Word.]

Despite the newness of their language, the lexicon – 'lightning', 'approaching' and the 'trumpeting' suggestive of Revelation – hints that the Futurist cult of the new has more in common with Symbolist messianism than they acknowledge when casting contemporaries such as Blok, Sologub and Briusov into the sea along with the classics.

Futurists, mostly aligned with an atheistic Left, appear to cross the boundary from apocalypticism into utopianism. However, in Maiakovskii's (for example) brashly

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[63] Valerii Briusov, *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy*, ed. by D.E. Maksimova and M.I. Dikman (Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel', 1961) pp. 278-79. Viacheslav Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, ed. by D.V. Ivanov and O. Deshart, 4 vols (Brussels: Foyer Oriental Chrétien, 1971-86) I, 778. On the background to the 'Mongol' discourse, see Valerii Maroshi, '"Mongol'skii mif" v ruskkoi literature XX veka', *Vestnik Tomskogo gosudarstvennogo pedagogicheskogo universiteta*, 1 (2003), 48-54.

[64] G.M. Hyde, 'Russian Futurism', in *Modernism: 1890-1930*, ed. by Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (London: Penguin, 1976) pp. 259-73 (p. 259).

[65] Burliuk et al., *Poshchechina* pp. 3, 4. On the issue of modernist form, it is interesting that this 1912 book publication of the manifesto contains texts by Kandinskii and an article on Cubism by Nikolai Burliuk, ibid., pp. 79-83 and pp. 95-100.

blasphemous juxtapositions of the sacred and profane there is a constant tension between desecrating the celestial and transfiguring the gutter. The titular image of his poem *Oblako v shtanakh* [*Cloud in Trousers*] (1915) provides a good example of such a compound. The 1916-17 poem *Chelovek* [*Man*] projects the poet's life and sufferings onto the Christ myth, and comprises sections entitled the 'Birth of Maiakovskii', 'Life of Maiakovskii', 'Passions of Maiakovskii', 'Ascension of Maiakovskii', 'Maiakovskii in the sky' and 'The Return of Maiakovskii'.[66]

A glance at the verse of Vladimir Gol'tsshmidt, a rather less well-known (and, sadly, less talented) figure, imparts a flavour of the moment. The self-entitled 'футурист жизни' [futurist of life] obviously rejects the old dogmas, yet his exalted path is an equally religious one:

> Сам же простой такой
> Земли хозяин пахарь,
> Ковбоец и герой,
> Изисканный [sic] я знахарь.
> И странник странных стран
> Куда иду не знаю
> Несу Евангелье-Коран
> Путь к истине познаю.[67]
> [Myself a simple
> Owner-ploughman of the land,
> A cowboy and hero,
> I'm a refined sorcerer.
> And a pilgrim of strange countries
> Where I go I know not
> I carry a Gospel-Koran
> I will recognize the path to truth.]

Pobeda nad solntsem [*Victory over the Sun*], the *Gesamtkunstwerk* staged in 1913 by Aleksei Kruchenykh, Velimir Khlebnikov, Kazimir Malevich and Mikhail Matiushin, depicts and celebrates a universal triumph over time.[68] The use of *zaum'* [trans-rational] language in the context of such a narrative is an eloquent example of the enduring import of the messianically charged 'new word' conceived of by Dostoevskii and Solov'ev for the Futurists in their quest to renew language.

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[66] Vladimir Maiakovskii, *Sobranie sochinenii v vos'mi tomakh*, ed. by L.V. Maiakovskaia, V.V. Vorontsova and A.I. Koloskova (Moscow: Pravda, 1968), I, 190-217.

[67] Vladi-mir Gol'tsshmitd, *Poslaniia Vladmira zhizni: s puti k istine* (Petropavlovsk, Kamchatka, 1919), p. 14.

[68] As Hyde, p. 266, comments, in contrast with Eliot and Proust, of whom we have spoken above, the victory consists not in a movement into the past, but a leap into the future. Explicit allusions to the biblical Apocalypse are pointed out by G. Gubanova, 'Gruppovoi portret na fone Apokalipsisa: K probleme tolkovaniia "Pobedy nad Solntsem", *Literaturnoe obozrenie*, 4 (1998), 69-77.

Malevich's Suprematist sets for *Victory over the Sun* also seem to be in accordance with Worringer's aforementioned idea that abstraction is a response to the need to transcend nature. In this respect it is revealing that just six years previously, in 1907, the same painter could produce a work such as *Torzhestvo neba* [*The Exultation of Heaven*], which in golden tones depicts a host of haloed figures floating on clouds (others stand on the earth), eyes shut in orison, around a much larger Christ-like torso emerging from a cloud. If the icon-like flat perspective recalls Worringer's notion that eschewing three-dimensional naturalism diminishes the time value by suppressing the referential framework, then Malevich's later wholly geometric forms entirely eliminate the referential and temporal from the canvas.

Kazimir Malevich, *Torzhestvo neba* (1907, oil on card, Gosudarstvennyi Russkii muzei, St. Petersburg).

Vasilii Kandinskii's book *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* [*Concerning the Spiritual in Art*], published in Germany in 1911, with a Russian edition following soon afterwards, provides first-hand evidence of spiritual motivation within the avant-

garde.[69] The treatise informs our apprehension of Kandinskii's progression – parallel to Malevich's – from a symbolic (a Symbolist?) language into full abstraction (for example, from the ecstatic, non-naturalistic depiction of a heavenly Moscow in 1916 to the later, non-figurative 'compositions').[70] Similarly, Ernst Neizvestnyi, who emerged as a sculptor during the 1960s and considers himself an heir to Kandinskii, Malevich and Tatlin, insists on the significance of religious thinkers such as Solov'ev, Nikolai Fedorov, Dostoevskii and Pavel Florenskii for artists of Russian avant-garde.[71] He claims that the deceptively technophile aspirations of Russian modernism sometimes mask its fundamentally spiritual intent, and he places its maximalism within the eschatological temperament of Russian philosophy and art.

To examine a final example from modernist pictorial arts, Nataliia Goncharova's *Misticheskie obrazy voiny* [*Mystical Images of War*], a set of lithographs from 1914, exemplify the distinctiveness of the Russian perception of crisis from what Kermode calls the 'apocalyptic tenor of much radical thinking about the arts in our century' in the West.[72] Goncharova's images refer to the book of Revelation (for instance *Kon' bled* [*Pale Horse*]) and Russian messianism (depictions of Saint Aleksandr Nevskii, and national heroes Peresvet and Osliabia) as well as to the concrete historical situation (contemporary uniforms and fighter aeroplanes). Overall, one suspects irony or at least ambivalence in the artist's attitude. There is an irreverent and quasi-anthropological note in the work's cataloguing intention; in particular, the cheerily primitivist symbols of Russia's war allies – *Angliiskii lev* [*English Lion*] and *Frantsuzskii petukh* [*French Cockerel*] – rather damage the absolute claims of other, Russian and universal messianic images. However, while Goncharova's lithographs perhaps have less pathos than certain fellow-country apocalypticists, their focus upon the mystical and mythical is representative. Comparison with a Western artist highlights this. The German painter Ludwig

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[69] Vasilii Kandinskii, *O dukhovnom v iskusstve* (Moscow: Arkhimed, 1992).
[70] Our understanding of Kandinskii's journey into abstraction is also enriched by his widely documented enthusiasm for Worringer's thesis. Indeed, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* was first published by R. Piper Verlag in Munich, the same house which had brought out *Abstraction and Empathy* three years earlier. See Alan Bullock, 'The Double Image', in *Modernism 1890-1930*, ed. by Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane (London: Penguin, 1976), pp. 58-79 (p. 63).
[71] Ernst Neizvestny, *Space, Time, and Synthesis in Art: Essays on Art, Literature and Philosophy*, trans. by A. Leong (Oakville, Ontario: Mosaic, 1990).
[72] Kermode, p. 93.

Meidner's series of *Apokalyptische Landschaften* [*Apocalyptic Landscapes*], executed between 1912 and 1914, dwell on the horrific and destructive aspects of the apocalypse myth. Meidner's near-contemporary apocalypses are to a large extent stripped of the supernatural: there are no angels and few hints of mythical language, excepting, occasionally, an apparently ballistic threat from stars (or stellar appearance of shells). They resemble modern cities gripped by war – images destined all too soon to be imitated by reality. Just as one could scarcely imagine a West-European artist producing Goncharova's *Mystical Images of War* in 1914 (at least, not without bitter sarcasm), Russia, for all its sufferings, had yet to paint so unremittingly pessimistic a portrait of the end of time as German Expressionism.

'Videnie' ['Vision'] and 'Angely i aeroplany' ['Angels and Aeroplanes'] from Nataliia Goncharova, *Misticheskie obrazy voiny: 14 litografii* (Moscow: V.N. Kashin, 1914), lithographs № 8, 10.

Overleaf: 'Grad obrechennyi' ['Doomed City'] from ibid., № 11

Ludwig Meidner, *Apokalyptische Landschaft* (1912, oil on canvas, private collection).

In order to complete this survey of the extent to which apocalypticism permeated the arts, we might also mention that major Russian composers also created works responsive to the discourse. Sergei Rakhmaninov's *Kolokola* [*The Bells*] (1913), Sergei Taneev's *Po prochtenii psalma* [*At the Reading of a Psalm*] (1915) and Sergei Prokof'ev's unrealized ballet *Ala i Lollii* [*Ala and Lollii*], written in 1915 and reworked in 1916 as the *Skifskaia siuita* [*Scythian Suite*], are prominent examples. While these pieces differ substantially as reflections of apocalyptic feelings, they share, both with each other and the previously-discussed works in other media, a sense that they are much more than expressions of modern cultural crisis.

This section has sought to demonstrate how the pre-Revolutionary generation of Russian modernism was imbued with the apocalyptic tradition, filtered through ideas about the spiritual, transformative qualities of aesthetic experience and the critical significance of the current era. Moreover, we can see that these concerns had a profound impact on the way artists of different media thought about style. (The specific relationship between apocalyptic discourse and literary style will be investigated in greater depth in the following chapter, on precursors to the case-study texts.) A Russian artist's experience of time could not be unaffected by the sense of being on the cusp of a new epoch – of realizing those deeply engrained intuitions that the nation's time was to come.[73] At the same time, the mystical revival around the turn of the century infused the tradition with a greater emphasis upon the timeless, transcendent realm of God and religious experience. Solov'ev declares:

> идея нации есть не то, что она сама думает о себе во времени, но то, что Бог думает о ней в вечности.[74]
> [a nation's idea is not that which it thinks about itself in time, but that which God thinks about it in eternity.]

In his wake arose new aspirations to access this eternity from the province of time and through the agency of art. The eschatological climate at the beginning of the twentieth century thus merges anticipation of messianic resolution with intuitions of immanent revelation.

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[73] This view was bolstered by having some international resonance and had even been endorsed by modernity's First Prophet, Nietzsche, who had described Russia as 'ein Reich, das Zeit hat und nicht von gestern ist' [an empire that has time and is not of yesterday]. Friedrich Nietzsche, 'Jenseits von Gut und Böse' in his *Werke in Drei Bänden* (Munich: Carl Hanser 1960), II, 563-759 (p. 717).
[74] Solov'ev, pp. 41-68 (p. 42).

Historical Cataclysms

The sustained period of international and civil war that bracketed the year 1917 intensified already heightened feelings of transcendence and epochal shift. Historical events appeared to confirm eschatological expectations. The revolutions of 1917 abruptly replaced centuries of Tsarism and Orthodox Christianity with the world's first state founded upon communist principles. Such radical re-organization of society had long been considered among versions of Russia's messianic destiny. Thinkers such as Solov'ev, Fedorov and Dmitrii Merezhkovskii envisaged the coming phase of Russian history as a Third Testament.[75] As one possible resolution of Russia's historical mission, the subject of revolution could be addressed in eschatological terms by radicals and reactionaries alike. In *Besy* [*The Demons*] (1872) Dostoevskii had portrayed revolutionaries as possessed by demonic forces; in 1913 Belyi's *Peterburg* [*Petersburg*] set a tale of political intrigue against an apocalyptically charged Petersburg; and SR terrorist Boris Savinkov's autobiographical *Kon' blednyi* [*The Pale Horse*], published the same year, borrowed its title and epigraph from the Revelation of St. John the Divine (6. 8).[76] Therefore, the closer Russia edged toward revolution, the more prescient the discourse began to appear. When the Revolution came, it chimed with messianic expectations that Russia would play a crucial role in the end of world history. It could also be identified as the climax of a period of cultural ferment and an affirmation of artists' claim to be charged with a special mission. It is testament to the strength of the apocalyptic tradition that it permeated a wide range of responses to the Revolution. To take just two examples, Vasilii Rozanov's *Apokalipsis nashego vremeni* [*Apocalypse of Our Time*] of 1917-18 apprehends the Revolution as the foundation of a new religion, whereas Maksimilian Voloshin considered it the work of the Antichrist, hateful yet preordained.

The experiences of bloodshed and privation reinforced the association with the apocalypse myth and deepened the need for it as a transcendental context to explain and order chaotic reality. Images of turmoil and bloodshed of course dominate the landscape of the biblical finale, and the fact that this had seeped into pre-war

[75] See Irene Masing-Delic, *Abolishing Death: A Salvation Myth of Russian Twentieth-Century Literature* (Stanford University Press, 1992), p. 5.
[76] Published under pseudonym: V. Ropshin, *Kon' blednyi* (Nice, 1913).

Russian discourse amplified its retrospective resonance. Blok had composed numerous verses of sinister portent, such as 'Gamaiun, ptitsa veshchaia' ['Gamaiun, the Prophetic Bird'] (1899) and 'Golos iz khora' ['Voice from the Choir'] (dated 1910-14). The second of these contains the following lines:

Все будет чернее страшный свет,
И все безумней вихрь планет
  Еще века, века!
И век последний, ужасней всех,
  Увидим и вы и я.
Все небо скроет грустный грех,
На всех устах застынет смех,
  Тоска небытия...
<...> Будьте ж довольны жизнью своей,
  Тише воды, ниже травы!
О, если б знали, дети, вы,
  Холод и мрак грядущих дней![77]
[The fearful light will grow ever darker,
And the whirlwind of planets ever madder,
  For ages, ages!
And the last age, most terrible of all,
  You and I will see.
Sad sin will cover the whole sky,
On all lips laughter will freeze,
  Yearning for non-existence...
<...> Be content with your life,
  Quieter than water, lower than grass!
O, if only you, children, knew
  The cold and dark of the coming days!]

The fashionable image of barbarians from the East overrunning Europe also struck a chord with the unruly violence now unleashed, even if it had originally registered principally as a metaphor for the sensual re-conquering the rational in battle for the heart.

The perception of the Revolutionary experience as the realization of Russian messianic intuitions therefore gained wide currency, and accordingly socio-political changes were broadly depicted in contemporary writing as cosmic events bringing about the end of history. A notable example is the group of writers published in the short-lived journal *Skify*, edited by R.V. Ivanov-Razumnik, who was ideologically close to the Social Revolutionaries.[78] A number of significant writers contributed,

[77] Aleksandr Blok, *Izbrannye sochineniia*, ed. by A. Turkov (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1988), pp. 21, 330-31.
[78] The first issue dates from November 1917, and the second (and final) from January 1918.

including Blok, Belyi, Remizov, Sergei Esenin, and Nikolai Kliuev. Mikhail Geller remarks:

> Октябрьская революция представляется крестьянским поэтам и теоретикам идеологии "Скифов" реализацией мечты – приходом золотого века на русскую землю. Многие "скифы" видят "избавителя" в Ленине.[79]
> [To the peasant poets and ideological theoreticians of the 'Scythians' the October Revolution appeared to be the realization of a dream – the arrival of the golden age on Russian soil. In Lenin many 'Scythians' saw the 'Saviour'.]

Indeed, Kliuev compared Lenin with Avvakum, the figurehead of Old Believer resistance to Peter the Great's religious reforms, and Esenin referred to Russia as the 'new Nazareth'.[80] Ivanov-Razumnik's 'Dve Rossii' ['Two Russias'], published in the second edition of *Skify*, likens Russia to the crucified Christ. Blok's celebrated and enormously influential poem *Dvenadtsat'* [*The Twelve*] (1918), of which there will be further discussion in the next chapter, places Christ at the head of a detachment of Red Guards making their way through a Petrograd in the eye of a universal blizzard. Later in 1918, Esenin's poem *Inoniia* [*Other-land*] pursues this theme, introducing a saviour into the world at the time of the October Revolution:

> «Новый на кобыле
> Едет к миру Спас.
> Наша вера – в силе.
> Наша правда – в нас!»[81]
> ["A new Saviour rides
> on a mare to the world.
> Our faith resides in strength.
> Our truth resides in us!"]

Belyi greeted the Revolution along similar lines with his poem *Khristos voskres* [*Christ is Risen*], also of 1918. The first part of the poem deals with the crucifixion of a rather Russian Christ, then proceeds to project the Easter narrative onto the death of a railway worker. The Revolution and this symbolic death are re-enactments of the divine sacrifice. The present is interpreted as a worldwide mystery ['совершается мировая мистерия'] bringing about a synthesis between the earthly time and the realm outside time ['вне-времени'].[82]

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[79] Mikhail Geller, *Andrei Platonov v poiskakh schast'ia* (Paris: YMCA, 1982), p. 213.
[80] See Peter J.S. Duncan, *Russian Messianism: Third Rome, Revolution, Communism and After* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 52.
[81] Sergei Esenin, *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy* (St Petersburg: Azbuka, 1998), p. 99.
[82] Andrei Belyi, 'Khristos voskres' in his *Stikhotvoreniia* (Berlin, Petrograd, Moscow, 1923), pp. 348-71. 'Вне-времени' appears three times: pp. 352, 361, 367.

Futurists, among the most enthusiastic cultural supporters of the new regime, also employ eschatological imagery in their treatment of the new world. Khlebnikov's apocalyptic *Ladomir* (1920) envisages horses and cattle sharing the new political freedoms.[83] Maiakovskii, as Masing-Delic records, claimed that time was obeying the order to 'go forward' into a future of constant novelty.[84] His 1922 poem 'Nashe voskresen'e' ['Our Sunday'] celebrates the dawning of a new religion without God and proclaims that October 25th is the Sunday of the new, communist calendar. Exploiting the derivation of 'voskresen'e' [Sunday] from 'voskresenie' [resurrection], Maiakovskii elaborates that the October Revolution was the day that the 'working slave was resurrected'.[85]

Messianic associations were not limited to the literary elite. In the early days of Soviet power Academician I.P. Pavlov wrote in a Sovnarkom publication:

> Иисус – вершина человечества, осуществляющая в себе величайшую из всех человеческих истин – истину о равенстве всех людей... Вы продолжаете дела Иисуса.[86]
> [Jesus is the zenith of humanity, realizing in himself the greatest of all human truths: the truth of the equality of all people... You continue the cause of Jesus.]

As Peter Duncan has pointed out, messianic elements within Marxism fed into Russian apocalypticism of the late nineteenth century onwards, and penetrated Bolshevik thought, notably the 'bogostroitel'stvo' [god-building] project associated with figures such as Commissar Anatolii Lunacharskii and Maksim Gor'kii. Duncan quotes Lunacharskii (who also compared the proletariat with Christ) as declaring that 'the new Messiah climbs Golgotha, its blood flows, it is nailed to the cross' and he notes that as early as 1906 Nikolai Berdiaev found 'a religious thirst and an eschatological hope' in Russian Marxism.[87]

As indicated above, in addition to those who broadly supported the Revolution, many figures who rejected it nevertheless accepted the apocalyptic paradigm. Voloshin's 'Sviataia Rus'' ['Holy Rus'] of 1917 expresses the poet's despair at the

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[83] Velimir Khlebnikov, *Tvoreniia*, ed. by M. Poliakova (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1986), pp. 281-93.
[84] Masing-Delic, *Abolishing Death*, p. 5.
[85] Maiakovskii, III, 182-84.
[86] *Sovetskaia kul'tura*, 14 January 1989, p. 10.
[87] Duncan, p. 52.

destruction of his nation, yet implies that the Revolution is itself a product of Old Russia, and therefore part of its destiny:

> Я ль в тебя посмею бросить камень?
> Осужу ль страстной и буйный пламень?
> В грязь лицом тебе ль не поклонюсь,
> След босой ноги благословляя, –
> Ты – бездомная, гулящая, хмельная,
> Во Христе юродивая Русь![88]
> [Shall I dare cast a stone at you?
> Shall I condemn your paschal and wild flame?
> My face in the mud, shall I not bow to you,
> Blessing your bare footprints, –
> You homeless, wanton, drunken,
> Fool in Christ Russia!]

Remizov's *Vzvikhrennaia Rus'* [*Whirlwind Russia*] (1927) is a polyphonic chronicle of the Revolution and its aftermath. As the title implies, the fragmentary work evokes a Russia wrought with the chaotic effects of history's 'storm'. While interacting with the apocalyptic paradigm and indeed borrowing the ubiquitous storm image, Remizov mourns the suffering and the destruction of what he valued in Old Russia.[89] The apocalyptic in Nikolai Gumilev's poem 'Zabludivshiisia tramvai' ['Strayed Tram'] (1920) is even less exultant. It narrates a journey upon a flying tram through an extra-temporal Petrograd and personal past. In this work cataclysmic imagery is condensed into a lyrical experience partly horrific, partly elegiac, without the consoling correlative of any obvious divine participation.[90]

Post-Revolutionary Time

The long-established apocalyptic discourse and the specific event of the Revolution (perceived, as we have seen, by a substantial section of the literary class as the historical realization of messianic expectations) generate a unique relationship to time in post-Revolutionary Russia. The nation defines itself as having leapt into the future (or broken fatefully with tradition) and thereby having perhaps realized its destiny. This situation raises certain questions – fundamental issues for this project – about the way time can subsequently be perceived. In examining literature of the post-Revolutionary period, this thesis will explore what happens when a national

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[88] Maksimilian Voloshin, *Stikhotvoreniia i poemy*, ed. by K.M. Azadovskii (St Petersburg: Nauka, 1995), pp. 217-18.
[89] Chapter two deals with *Whirlwind Russia* in greater depth.
[90] Nikolai Gumilev, 'Zabludivshiisia tramvai', in his *Izbrannoe*, ed. by I.A. Pankeev (Moscow: Prosveshchenie, 1990), pp. 143-45.

narrative so immersed in messianic expectation of the end collides with a point of historical 'closure'. More specifically, how are the apocalypse discourse and associated perceptions of time affected when the Revolution has divested them of the element of expectation? How, indeed, does one experience time after the End: the post-apocalyptic?

One can conceive of various possible responses to these circumstances. If the eschatological paradigm is taken literally, then one might expect post-Revolutionary time to be paradisiacal and revelatory. Alternatively, the end of history could be seen as the end of change, and therefore introduce a state of stasis or repetition. The Revolution could also be conceived as the initiation of a new era or a new cycle of time. Another possibility would be that experience of the supposedly transformed world fails to realize expectations, causing a writer to regard the new era not as the dawn of a messianic age, but as a travesty of the ideal, or leading him to reassess the apocalyptic model itself.

Meyer Howard Abrams's book *Natural Supernaturalism* offers a precedent for this study by looking at the effect of the French Revolution on contemporary West-European apocalypticism.[91] Abrams finds that when millenarian hopes invested in the Revolution were shaken by the Jacobin reign of terror, English and German Romanticism did not reject those aspirations, but channelled them into an 'eschatology of consciousness': reaching New Jerusalem 'not by changing the world but by changing the way we see the world.'[92] He thus provides a noteworthy example of the way a historical event comparable to the Bolshevik Revolution might dilute, dispel or alter apocalyptic expectations.[93]

When searching for an equivalent shift in stance in Russia, a crucial area is the treatment of the specific tension inherent in the association of a divinely-charged model of time with the Revolution. It is paradoxical that the putative consummation of apocalyptic expectations is also the historical victory of atheism and materialist philosophy over religious tradition. Marxism is a historicist system of the nineteenth

[91] Meyer Howard Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism* (New York: Norton, 1971).
[92] Ibid., p. 347.
[93] David Bethea has engaged with Abrams's theory and suggested that similar shifts occur in Russian eschatologism after the Red Terror, a claim that we can evaluate according to the experience of this project in the concluding chapter. Bethea, pp. 37-38.

century which shares with eschatologism a conception of time destined for an end.[94] However, its refutation of God weakens the absolute basis for this belief. This leaves the irreversibility of historical progression prone to challenge, as seen in later, modernist-tinted incarnations of Marxism. An example is Benjamin, mentioned above, who envisaged an 'angel of history' that is forever propelled into the future but turned toward the past, observing the debris of progress accumulate.[95] The Revolution thus occupies an ambivalent position. It is both the climax of history and the apotheosis of atheistic modernity, which has a propensity to suspect the determinism of 'history' and absoluteness of 'the end'. This tension provides a space in which the kind 'demythologization' of the apocalypse described by Kermode is conceivable.

The writer's sense of time and treatment of revolutionary messianism not only reflects his ideological approach to the Revolution, but also fundamental intuitions of being. His level of credence toward the notion of being situated at the end of time and his attitude toward the possibilities and restrictions involved in it define his existential condition more generally. Therefore, the overriding issue of this thesis also concerns the extents to which the post-Revolutionary era fulfils the spiritual promise of Russian messianism, for the authors concerned, or confronts them with some of the philosophical anxieties more commonly associated with Western modernism.

Project Aims

This project will explore literary responses to the post-Revolutionary Russian context in the light of the more general theories (based on Western literature) outlined in the first section. The intention is to establish how far the ideas of Joseph Frank and Frank Kermode can be applied to Russian modernist prose and illuminate it, and correspondingly in what areas the theories turn out to be inadequate, due to the distinct contexts and preoccupations of Russian modernism. This will therefore be a two-way process, and the material may lead to interesting re-definitions of some of the theoretical premises.

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[94] Lenin's attacks on relativism in science in order to defend the objective material reality of absolute time and space (in his polemics with Bogdanov) remind one that Party-line Bolshevism is an Enlightenment ideology. See Kern, pp. 134-35.

[95] Walter Benjamin, *Ein Lesebuch*, ed. by M. Opitz (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1996), pp. 669-70.

Among Western theories of modernism Kermode's and Frank's are particularly relevant to the Russian situation thanks to the way they reveal the possible impact of the apocalypse myth and the desire to overcome time on the style and structure of the text. Of course, both transcendence of time and eschatology have considerable resonance in Russian culture at that moment. Therefore, the observations made by the scholars about ways in which the formal structures of a text can reflect attitudes to time are transferable, as long as appropriate weight is attached to the distinctive connotations these myths and aspirations carry in the Russian setting. This thesis will proceed on the understanding that the selected theories are not rigid templates onto which Russian texts will be imposed, but prompt new questions to be applied in order to engage with the texts in an original manner.

Making use of theories based on Anglo-European modernism is motivated by two further factors. The first concerns the hypothesis, outlined above, that the projection of an atheistic Revolution onto the apocalyptic paradigm would result in an unravelling of the discourse. This in turn could be expected to lead certain minds to confront the philosophical ramifications of relativism and the fragmentation of absolutes. If this process were analogous to the 'death of God' in Western experience, then 'Spatial Form in Modern Literature' and *The Sense of an Ending* are suited to drawing out the repercussions of such a consciousness for perceptions of time and timelessness.

Secondly, these universal theories provide a basis from which to develop equivalent approaches relating specifically to Russian modernism, which we currently lack. Among the mass of literature about Russian messianism there is a marked absence of theoretical work on the way apocalyptic feelings and intentions might manifest themselves in literary form. The importance of the symbol and myth as part of the Symbolist aesthetic-eschatological project has been adequately digested. However, we lack accounts of how more abstract, formal properties relate to the apocalyptic consciousness. This lacuna is all the more regrettable with regard to later modernists who shared Symbolism's transformative aspirations yet, rejecting overt religiosity, placed less emphasis on myth (and content) and more on the effects of language (and form). This scholarly neglect is surprising when a relatively large

amount is known about the connection between abstract form and spiritual intentions among contemporary visual artists of the Russian avant-garde.

Conversely, it is curious that two theories which have generated such broad discussion have been practically ignored by the field of Russian studies – especially, as indicated above, given the pertinence to Russia of the issues of time and transcendence they consider.

Frank and Kermode in Russia

Patricia Carden's article 'Ornamentalism and Modernism', published in 1976, reads like the introductory statement of a fruitful dialogue between Slavists and the spatial theory.[96] However, this pioneering application of the idea to Russian literature appears to have remained unanswered. This project is therefore a belated response to Carden's invitation to engage with Frank's theory.

Frank's less controversial observation is the technical one that the fragmentation of 'units of meaning' (whether on the level of narrative or grammar) reduces the temporal component in literature and consequently, compared with received expectations of literature, renders it more 'spatial'. This study will explore the possible relationship in post-Revolutionary (post-apocalyptic) Russian modernist texts between such a timeless effect and perceptions of time or attitudes toward it.

As seen above, Frank describes, then interprets, a stylistic tendency; Kermode, challenging him, proposes an alternative interpretation. Frank's analysis of the spatial effect does not depend upon the veracity of his account of its philosophical implications. For instance, he does not impute to Flaubert the alienation from time that he identifies in Eliot. Since the technical analysis of the spatial or timeless effect stands autonomous of Frank's interpretation, the style is subject to different accounts.[97] Frank and Kermode represent two poles on that interpretive scale, the former positing a sense of revelation and transcendence, and the latter – a descriptive fragmentation, polyphony and deconstruction. Among the responses to

[96] Patricia Carden, 'Ornamentalism and Modernism', in *Russian Modernism: Culture and the Avant-Garde, 1900-1930*, ed. by George Gibian and H.W. Tjalsma (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1976), pp. 49-64.

[97] In fact, since Kermode's broader strokes paint a much less detailed picture, Frank's closer reading is useful for exploring how his opponent's ideas might be manifested in a given text.

time after 1917 imagined above, Frank's approach to fragmented styles is compatible with paradisiacal or epiphanic conceptions. They are also compatible with the Symbolist legacy of accessing religious revelation via art – or, one step further, substituting the aesthetic for the spiritual. Conversely, Kermode's notion of the erosion of linear narrative structures as evidence of the revision of grand narratives (and the biblical meta-narrative) would chime with more sceptical or pessimistic responses to the existential situation ushered in by the Revolution.

The task of navigating these contrasting possibilities immediately encounters the problem of how to attach conceptual significance to a formal device. Meaning in form is elusive, because it relies upon the vagaries of reader response. Fragmentation can entail the fusion of both new connections (we can think of Apollinaire's *toucher*) and disconnections, and it is hard to demonstrate where the stress lies. This touches upon a broader ambivalence in modernism, alluded to above. The fragmentation of certainties is also an emancipation from deterministic absolutes; alienation can involve both a sense of existential catastrophe and, as in Viktor Shklovskii's *ostranenie*, an ability to envision the world afresh. Another source of this difficulty resides in the fact that form in literature is especially difficult to isolate from content. Fragmentation and juxtaposition reorganize 'units of meaning' as well as purely formal exercises in rhythm and structure. Therefore, any attempt to decipher the significance of juxtaposition relies heavily on the content of fragments. Thus to a large extent do both Frank's and Kermode's equally plausible interpretations of modernist form proceed from their respective, extra-formal understandings of modernism.

The common weakness of the theories as purely formal analyses is instructive for the current study. It illustrates the need to demonstrate that inferences drawn from stylistic properties are consistent with what is stated and implied by content. Frank himself acknowledges that such an approach to literature relies on the relationship between style and thematic-conceptual elements when he asserts that the 'duality of form and content must cease to exist'.[98] Consequently, the thematic treatment of time, and specifically Russian apocalypse discourse, will play a crucial role in mediating our apprehension of its stylistic treatment. One's perception of

[98] Frank, 'Spatial Form', p. 57.

'spatialization' or 'fragmentation' (with a positive or negative charge) will inevitably be influenced by the author's attitude to post-apocalyptic time. Simultaneously, the visceral effect caused by the particular way in which incongruous elements are juxtaposed (and, of course, the nature of those elements) contributes to the depiction of that attitude. The tangled circularity of style and content requires that neither are examined in complete isolation.

This is arguably all the more true when applying the theories to the Russian context, where time is so interwoven with a narrative. The centrality of the apocalypse myth supplies Frank's 'timeless' effect and revelatory impact with a literal significance absent in Joyce and Proust. Similarly, Kermode's view of a rejection of narrative closure stemming from the declining credibility of the divine scheme of historical resolution is second-guessed by events in the Russian context. His notion of an 'immanent apocalypse' comes into fruition in a very different sense in Soviet Russia. Moreover, the historical post-apocalyptic perspective raises narratological problems about the 'sense of an end' without necessarily challenging the premise of an End. On the other hand, this technical issue might influence philosophical ones if, as a result of this perspective, the world's complexities and the existential questions associated with the End were projected together onto the present.

Selection of Case Studies

A number of criteria have determined the selection of works for in-depth examination. Foremost, corresponding to the aims of the project, they must both demonstrably interact with notions of 'new time' emanating from revolutionary messianism and exhibit a formal fragmentation applicable to the theoretical models outlined in sections one and three. Apart from that, the overarching question of how post-apocalyptic time is experienced involves basic and profound issues concerning the nature of being, for the Russian apocalyptic paradigm is religious at root and has promised salvation and revelation. Therefore, this existential perspective should be prominent in the chosen text's approach to the discourse.

With regard to the period covered, the concept of subsequence to resolution is important, and it will thus be interesting to explore how the lengthening perspective beyond the Revolution (from mid- to post-apocalyptic) affects the sense of End.

While a comprehensive survey would be impossible within the parameters of this project, and different writers obviously possess individual ideas and sensibilities, a certain chronological span would afford some scope to identify shifts in the stylistic treatment of time against the backdrop of the maturing Soviet age. This could be significant in terms of how Kermode's 'immanent apocalyptic' notion translates into the Russian context. Therefore, case-study texts will be selected from a period between the Revolution and the Second World War (which supplanted the Revolution as the primary focus of historical and existential ideas).

There are many works of literature after 1917 which treat the Revolution according to the apocalyptic model or present the new world 'spatially'. Several have been eliminated on the grounds that they satisfy one of these conditions more adequately than the other, or lack the desired existential perspective. However, several texts not chosen for closer attention are nonetheless contextually important to the project, and thus warrant an outline before we proceed to discuss the three case studies.

The *Proletkul't* movement created a great deal of eschatologically-derived utopian literature, and particularly verse. Though not of central interest to this project because its approach is dogmatically partisan, *Proletkul't* makes an influential contribution to eschatological discourse after the Revolution and is an important bridge into the 1920s for the cosmist aspirations of the pre-Revolutionary avant-garde.

Evgenii Zamiatin, sometimes an acerbic critic of *Proletkul't* panegyrics, also provides a useful context, particularly in his concept of 'entropy' – the danger of stagnation entailed in the belief of having attained perfection – reflected in works such as the 1921 essay 'Rai' ['Paradise'] and the anti-utopian novel *My* [*We*] of 1920. Zamiatin's early critique of the apocalyptic premise is particularly important given both his influence on younger writers and the way he associates the technical-literary problem of the end with the socio-philosophical one. However, his texts will remain contextual because, more about utopianism than eschatology, they are not so directly orientated toward the issue of satisfying 'religious' needs inherent to the messianic origins of the discourse.

Boris Pil'niak is one of the most renowned among numerous practitioners of florid, experimental prose in the wake of Belyi and Remizov. His novel *Golyi god* [*The Naked Year*], published in 1922, is constructed from juxtaposed fragments and depicts Russia in the midst of eschatological revolution. However, Pil'niak's apocalypticism primarily resides in his adoption of the *skify* metaphor of the cleansing, primal Eastern force sweeping away the false civilization of European (Petersburgian) Russia. As such, the reader senses that for Pil'niak the apocalyptic formulation is a means to talk about Russia and its history, and not a basis to evaluate the condition of humanity vis-à-vis this End-point. Correspondingly, Pil'niak's fragmented style can more persuasively be ascribed to a desire to portray the apocalyptic disorder of the revolutionary experience than to simulate the revelatory psychological effect of timelessness, along the lines of the spatial theory. Carden claims that 'Pil'niak's work depicted chaos by being chaotic.'[99]

In fact, Carden remarks that in the 1920s a style with a surface similarity to Belyi's (though lacking its underlying cohesion) became a stock method in order to embody things too great to be ordered in words. Modernists such as Konstantin Fedin, Vsevolod Ivanov and Lidiia Seifullina experimented with narrative time and verbal texture. Even realists sometimes borrowed such techniques, for example passages in the first version of Fedor Gladkov's proto-Socialist Realist novel *Tsement* [*Cement*]. Since this (spatially and temporally finite) study intends to concentrate on works interacting with the pre-Revolutionary aesthetics of spiritual transformation (if not necessarily achieving it), such authors will be excluded.

The style and structure of Leonid Dobychin's remarkable short novel *Gorod En* [*The Town of N*] (1935) are intimately bound to perceptions of time. The child-narrator's limited insight into the world he describes enables the author to laconically expose religious hypocrisy and the truism of progress. The novel's historical pessimism (indicated by relentless repetition of banality in counterpoint to social and technological development) is juxtaposed with the *Bildungsroman* plot of the emergence of an artist's consciousness in the narrator. *The Town of N* thereby deals with the problem of reassessing the aesthetic as a vehicle for transcendence from a philosophical stance that leaves little scope for historical resolution or

[99] Carden, 'Ornamentalism', p. 62.

spiritual transformation. As such, much can be drawn out that has implications for the overarching questions of this thesis. However, Dobychin's relationship with the apocalypse discourse (as opposed to themes arising from it) is more tangential than that of the writers selected for closer examination.

Mikhail Bulgakov's novels *Belaia gvardiia* [*The White Guard*] (1925) and *Master i Margarita* [*The Master and Margarita*] (1940) depict Kiev in the wake of the Revolution and Stalinist Moscow, respectively, within a framework of apocalyptic imagery. *The White Guard* employs the conventional symbol of the snowstorm to convey the confusion and superhuman scale of events, though it assumes an ambivalent stance toward the Revolution itself. As becomes clearer in *The Master and Margarita*, the cosmic realm for Bulgakov tends to be a benchmark against which the shortcomings of the earth are measured, and it is simultaneously associated with the sanctity of artistic creation. While Bulgakov invests the aesthetic with considerable importance, specific questions about the relationship between aesthetic and spiritual experience do not occupy a prominent space in his thought. As such, he is sooner a defender of the imagination than an heir to the aesthetically-mediated apocalypticism of the Symbolist tradition, and more ethical in focus than existential. The manner in which *The Master and Margarita* cuts between parallel plotlines can be examined in the context of the spatial paradigm. However, his prose does not provide material for stylistic analysis on the level of 'smaller units of meaning', and therefore cannot be so aptly compared with the other chosen works.

The chronological scope of this study can regrettably not be extended in order to dedicate attention to Boris Pasternak's *Doktor Zhivago* (1957), which responds both thematically and formally to our basic premises. Nevertheless, Boris Gasparov's article 'Temporal Counterpoint as a Principle of Formation' is a rare Russian echo of Frank's spatial theory (and thus also a source of encouragement, for there is no indication that he is aware of Frank's theory).[100] Gasparov remarks upon Pasternak's 'symphonic' handling of 'several lines of events, each moving at a

[100] Boris Gasparov, 'Temporal Counterpoint as a Principle of Formation in *Doctor Zhivago*', in *Doctor Zhivago: A Critical Companion*, ed. by Edith W. Clowes (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1995), pp. 89-114.

different speed with its own rhythm and direction.'[101] This not only affects the impression of time in the novel, but gives rise to the kind of patterns which, in accord with the spatial theory, are apprehended in a counter-linear manner: 'Only by juxtaposing different clues scattered throughout, the reader comes to realize a contrapuntal concurrence in what at first glance appears to be a commonplace situation.'[102] Pasternak's polyphonic structures thereby effect a range of structural, narratological, thematic and symbolic coincidences, through which (we might add: 'perceived retrospectively') unifying quasi-mystical elements and pantheistic interpretations emerge.

Babel', Platonov and Zoshchenko

The texts selected for detailed examination are Isaak Babel''s *Red Cavalry* (1926), Andrei Platonov's *Chevengur* (1929), and Mikhail Zoshchenko's *Before Sunrise* (1943). Despite their differences, the three texts have enough in common in order to draw coherent comparisons. They contain examples of the juxtaposition of fragments, which loosens the correlation between narrative order and the linear flow of time. Moreover, their ideological stances toward the apocalypse discourse and notion of new time are comparable. All three writers want to support the Revolution but are not always blind followers. None gives reason to conclude he has a literal religious faith. Thus while they interact with apocalyptic conceptions of the Revolution, they do not insist on a cosmic, absolute interpretation. The chosen texts appear to embody a sincere struggle to make sense of the new world and to determine whether the messianic myth (which is undoubtedly desirable) stands up to critical examination. This reflects an existential focus prominent in the three authors' approach to time. In each work end-orientated time is conceived to some extent as an alternative to the deterministic, cyclical patterns of nature. Their treatment of the Revolution-Apocalypse model goes beyond serving as a means to justify or condemn it, or to represent its chaotic enormity.

The three works thus occupy an ambivalent territory between a sense of revolutionary revelation and challenging this messianic model in Soviet attire, making them appropriate locations to explore tensions in the paradigm, as

[101] Ibid., p. 93.
[102] Ibid., pp. 101-02.

envisaged above. In the context of Frank's and Kermode's theories about the conceptual significance of form, we can thus approach these texts with the expectation that they might respond to both interpretive poles. They would, therefore, also be suited to probing the interrelationships and demarcations of the two theories.

The chronological distribution of the three works makes it possible to observe how ideas might unfold as the supposed End recedes into the past and also against the background of the development of the young state. The texts represent three distinct stages of the post-Revolutionary period. *Red Cavalry*, a near-contemporary depiction of the Polish front of the Civil War, mainly written between 1923 and 1924, belongs to the first period of revolutionary romanticism. *Chevengur* was written at the end of the 1920s and addresses that idealism from the context of consolidated, bureaucratized Soviet power. Platonov moves further from the Symbolist generation and explores the deepening disparity between the origins and current situation of the apocalyptic paradigm. In the 1930s the rhetoric of transformation was subsumed into official propaganda. Growing demands and restrictions on literature make it increasingly difficult to gauge personal responses to this development. To the extent that *Before Sunrise* is an exception, the reader is indebted to Zoshchenko's guile at exploiting the ambiguities of narratorial-authorial relationships and to the slight relaxation in censorship during the Second World War (despite which the work was suppressed halfway through publication). Although released in 1943, *Before Sunrise* can be read as a dialogue between the spiritual Silver Age and utopian 1930s Party ideology, mediated by an autobiographical narrator who has travelled from the former to the latter.

At this point we can characterize the three case-study texts individually.

Red Cavalry

Babel''s cycle of short stories is chronologically the closest of our three principal works to the heroic-apocalyptic aura surrounding the aftermath of the Revolution, as well as to the transcendental aesthetics influential in pre-Revolutionary art. Perhaps unsurprisingly, therefore, one can find in Babel''s treatment of messianic and apocalyptic themes more traces of the connotations they had in 1917 and 1918.

As the Revolution sweeps into, and 'delivers', traditional communities centred around churches and synagogues, there seems to be a real possibility that the old religions have been made redundant by a new one. Yet while witnessing the sweeping away of the old religions, Babel' investigates the artistry by which 'spiritual' experiences are synthesized. Thereby, he also interacts with the Symbolist concept of aesthetically mediated spiritual transformation. This is underlined by Babel''s association of apocalyptic imagery with art, artists and aesthetic experience. We are thus encouraged to investigate whether fragmentation in *Red Cavalry* corresponds with its messianic themes: whether the context of apocalyptic timelessness is accompanied by the revelatory impact of Babel''s 'spatial' prose.

On the other hand, the anxiety and irony of Babel''s narrator distance him from hymn-singers who greeted the Revolution in unequivocally apocalyptic (or utopian) terms. His roving gaze transmits ambivalence and paradox, as a result of which Babel' is sensitive to the inconsistencies between paradigm and reality. For these reasons *Red Cavalry* is also a suitable text in which to seek the subversion of apocalyptic models that Kermode champions in modernism.

As a result, *Red Cavalry* is an ideal starting point for this project. The cycle is finely poised between the artist-narrator's revelatory experiences and his sceptical intellect with ethical scruples, and it is receptive to both spatial-transcendental and polyphonic-deconstructing interpretations of modernist form.

Chevengur

If one detects remnants of the aesthetic-transformative tradition in Babel', the flight of the religious constituent from apocalyptic paradigms is more palpable in Platonov's novel. When one reads *Chevengur*, which was completed in 1929, one senses its greater chronological and philosophical distance from the pre- and mid-Revolutionary imagination, and indeed from the purported point of end itself. Also tangible is the disillusionment of a *proletkul'tist* who sincerely regarded the Revolution as a leap into the future but subsequently witnessed the pragmatism of NEP and the sub-cosmic force of bureaucratization. These various factors imbue

Platonov's attitude toward 'new time' and existence at the end of history with a mixture of strong idealism and reluctant scepticism.

Chevengur, a no-place at the terminus of time that is also somewhere in the Russian steppe in the mid-1920s, is built from a profusion of mythic and philosophical projections that had previously been invested in the Russian End. This construction enables Platonov to explore the idea of a transformed world, and also to compare the model with reality. Both of these are conducive to exposing ironies – tensions within the paradigms and disjunctions of ideal and actual – which could draw our reception of the polyphonic text in a Kermodian direction.

At the same time, Platonov's use of modernist juxtapositions can be shown to interact with concepts of time more clearly than can Babel''s. The structural evocation of timelessness suggests that the narrated experiment with time is also to be experienced by the reader. Our impression of whether the End in *Chevengur* turns out transcendently thus depends both on its narrative course and the extent to which its fragmented form creates the revelatory 'space' we associate with Frank's theory.

Before Sunrise

Zoshchenko's *Before Sunrise* is of particular interest because it enables us to see our paradigm – the existential experience of historical resolution – refracted through the context of High Stalinism. Not completed until 1943, but (its material compiled over the preceding decade) really a product of the 1930s, *Before Sunrise* represents a period which on one hand had become totally intolerant of explicit religiosity. On the other hand, Stalin's regime aggressively mythologized itself, eschatological discourse was transmuted into Party dogma, proclaiming a qualitative break with the past, and a heroic tone was prescribed to literature. In line with these attitudes, Zoshchenko endorses notions of spiritual and social transformation, while totally rejecting the religious aspects of the messianic myth from which it derives. He correspondingly borrows imagery related to the apocalyptic model but strips it of the Christian referent.

Before Sunrise is ostensibly an autobiographical narrative of the author's victory over the depression that blighted his life up to the age of thirty. Snapshots of his life

prior to transformation enable us to compare a catastrophic, 'modernist' past with a resolved, Stalinist present, each with their respective existential attitudes and aesthetic postures. In dialogue with one another, they offer contrasting conceptions of transformation: one related to the transcendental aesthetics of the rejected Silver Age, and the other delivering a theological catechism on behalf of the new (state) religion of Reason. The overall relationship of the work to our overarching question about responses to time thus comes to partially depend on whether we accept the author's sincerity or suspect a degree of concession to political pressures. This factor frames the issue of the text's place in the Frank-Kermode polarity in an interesting new context.

The complex, dialogic structure of *Before Sunrise* makes Frank's and Kermode's theories relevant tools for its interpretation. Narrative time is stratified by a narratorial 'I' that exists in the writing present, recounting the autotherapy of 1926, and in turn re-experiencing a more remote past. In addition, the three chapters setting out the narrator's sick past consist of much smaller units of meaning, juxtaposed in non-chronological arrangements. This fragmentation is reminiscent of the methods prevalent in the heyday of modernism and invites more direct comparison with the spatial theory than the polyphony of the whole.

Central issues

For the sake of clarity, this introductory chapter will conclude by recapitulating the issues to be explored through the three case-study chapters. The key areas of enquiry may be summarized in the following three questions: How does the collision of the apocalyptic discourse with the point of historical end (the Revolution) affect the perception of time? How do the authors handle the tension between the Revolution's consummation of messianic expectation and its demystifying function (between its statuses as a new religion and anti-religion)? And what relationship does this have (if any) to fragmentation or spatialization in prose?

Having already noted the nebulousness of fragmentation as a purely formal property, we must accept the need to demonstrate a thematic involvement with the apocalypse discourse and derived questions of time. Expressed aspirations for and

perceptions of post-Revolutionary time (whether it is revelatory or stagnant, or corresponds to another of the possible responses to the post-apocalyptic condition, imagined above) will therefore provide the foundation and contextual framework to investigate technical devices. The burden of proof is all the greater with Babel' and Zoshchenko, who have barely and never (respectively) been discussed before in the context of the messianic tradition. Whereas the eschatological elements in *Chevengur* are explicit, the obliquely apocalyptic imagery in *Red Cavalry* can be overlooked amid the intricate mass of interconnecting cultural and mythological references, and the political context in which *Before Sunrise* was written is responsible for a range of prescriptions and proscriptions that disguise underlying continuities in the paradigm.

In conjunction with the information attained from the conceptual level, we will address questions about the effect of fragmentation and juxtaposition with regard to time. Here it will be asked whether the stylistic and structural impact reinforces or undermines thematically raised perceptions of new time. Having applied Frank's spatial analysis as the basic tool to reveal how the temporal element in a text is suppressed, the case study will approach the question of the extent to which the resulting pattern is revelatory or aestheticized (following Frank's interpretation) and, conversely (akin to Kermode's), how far it conveys some sort of intuition of non-resolution.

These broad questions in turn elicit more specific ones burrowing deeper into the author's worldview; the key to answering them lies not in comprehensive theories but in close attention to the given text. The question 'What happens to the Symbolist-influenced apocalyptic paradigm (wherein poetry is a method of achieving spiritual transformation) when the religious foundation is undermined?' can be directed at both Frankian and Kermodian findings. If a kind of aesthetically-based revelation is detected, what does it mean fundamentally and existentially, given its lack of absolute or mystical basis? Is the text conscious of or troubled by the tension? Conversely, in a fragmented text that did not turn out to possess a 'spatial' unity, to what extent would it function as more than a depiction of chaos (as Carden views Pil'niak), but rather to question the very notion of an end? These issues might be informed by the way time is represented through the structure of the

text (perhaps revealing repetitions) and by the treatment of natural phenomena (especially the cycle of life and death) in the context of philosophical materialism.

* * *

This thesis is attempting to cover a considerable amount of virgin soil. Neither Frank's nor Kermode's theories have been applied to Russian eschatologism before, and indeed there has been no study dedicated to the interrelationship of prose style and apocalyptic time in Russia. Moreover, relatively few scholars have dedicated attention to the evolution of apocalypticism beyond the climactic point of the Revolution, and the specific problems of 'post-apocalypticism' have never been the focus of a study of this size.

Briefly examining certain pre-Revolutionary texts (from and influenced by the Symbolist movement) will enable us to consider the connection between formal experimentation and apocalypticism independently of the separate, post-apocalyptic context. Doing so also presents the opportunity to examine in greater depth major pre-Revolutionary writers who engaged with the apocalyptic paradigm. This is an important context first of all because that generation set a precedent for younger writers to follow or react against, and any notion of a post-Revolutionary evolution requires a point from which to depart. Secondly, tracing the fragmentary style back to its roots in the works of literary innovators such as Belyi and Remizov demonstrates interesting coincidences between the genesis of literary modernism and the transcendental aspirations of writers. Therefore, before we concentrate on the three case-study texts, chapter two will test out our spatial-apocalyptic hypothesis, seeking in the process to establish a historical basis for the subsequent account of literature of the 1920s and beyond.

Chapter Two – Precursors

As seen in the introductory chapter, 'younger Symbolists' such as Viacheslav Ivanov, Blok and Belyi were drawn to the role of theurgic artist propounded by Vladimir Solov'ev. Although the Symbolist movement invested more heavily in poetry as a means to its spiritual ends, this chapter will develop the argument that its eschatological aspirations additionally shaped modernist prose of the pre-Revolutionary period. Specifically, we will explore the extent to which Frank's spatial theory can draw out a proclivity for 'aesthetic timelessness' in the context of Symbolism's pervasive apocalyptic mood.

Works of the first generation of Russian modernism are important precursors to the case-study texts. One would scarcely imagine that later modernists, who adopted and adapted the stylistic innovations of Symbolism and Futurism, neglected to interact with their philosophical agendas. Consequently, any aims or conceptual assumptions implicitly conveyed by form (or even in the association of a stylistic effect with an author's or movement's ideological priorities) have the potential to endure along with the formal innovation. Writers such as Belyi, Blok, Remizov and the Futurists represent a significant context for the second reason that their immediate responses to the Revolution are very influential in cementing its literary depiction within the terms of eschatological myth. Not only do they affirm the image of the Revolution as an apocalypse on the eve of the period under discussion, but they also thereby encourage the notion that this is the climax toward which the modernist project has striven. A text such as Belyi's *Christ is Risen* (mentioned in chapter one) practically portrays the Revolution as an apotheosis of Symbolism, and the idea that it is directly related to the theurgic art movement appears in the contemporary essays of Blok, Belyi and even Ivanov (who was more inclined to perceive the Revolution in a disastrous light).[1]

Patricia Carden's article 'Ornamentalism and Modernism', which relates the spatial theory to Russia, focuses on this pre-Revolutionary generation. Noting that the

[1] See for example Blok's 'Intelligentsiia i revoliutsiia' (1918), in Aleksandr Blok and Andrei Belyi, *Dialog poetov o Rossii i revoliutsii*, ed. by M.F. P'ianykh (Moscow: Vysshaia shkola, 1990), pp. 415-25; Belyi's 'Revoliutsiia i kul'tura' (1917), in Blok, *Dialog poetov*, pp. 471-89; Ivanov's 'Revoliutsiia i samoopredelenie Rossii' (1917) and 'O krizise gumanizma' (1919), in Viacheslav Ivanov, *Sobranie sochinenii*, ed. by D.V. Ivanov and O. Deshart, 4 vols (Brussels: Foyer Oriental Chrétien, 1971-86), III, 354-64, and III, 367-82.

1900s and 1910s were a time when the arts came closer and common ideas were applied to different media, Carden (like Frank) posits a literary equivalent to the 'will to abstraction' described by Worringer in the field of painting. Where Worringer brackets 'restlessness, repetitiveness, lack of harmony, and lack of symmetry' with spiritual striving, Carden identifies equivalent tendencies in pre-Petrine culture, which is inherited by the Symbolists via the 'counter tradition' of Gogol' and Leskov. These imperatives of style are manifest in the visual arts in Russia at the beginning of the twentieth century (above all in Kandinskii) and simultaneously in the formally complex prose of Belyi, Remizov and Khlebnikov, all of whom 'single-mindedly pursued a spiritual absolute.' Therefore, Carden considers both the stylistic intricacy and thematic primitivism of these writers 'justified artistically and psychologically [as] strategies for regaining a spiritual intensity present in the earlier tradition.'[2]

Beyond observing their common 'pursuit of a spiritual absolute', Carden does not allude to the fact that Belyi, Khlebnikov and Remizov all contributed to contemporary apocalyptic discourse. Although she refrains from venturing this more concrete association, the conjunction of her reference to Frank's 'instantaneous effect free from time' with her remark that this style later became a popular method for evoking the turmoil of the Revolution (which, we have seen, many viewed as the end of time) has certainly assisted this later reader to do so.[3] Stephen Hutchings similarly approaches the issue of meaning in fragmentation in Silver Age narrative while neglecting the context of end-time.[4] Hutchings's conception of the anti-plot of *byt* as a vision of a deeper reality raises possible analogies with Frank's spatial theory. Yet in rooting this attitude in the Orthodox emphasis upon iconic embodiment, he shifts emphasis away from the impact of self-conscious apocalypticism upon narrative time and experience of real time, which is arguably a more immediate and more tangible factor.

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[2] Patricia Carden, 'Ornamentalism and Modernism', in *Russian Modernism: Culture and the Avant-Garde, 1900 – 1930*, ed. by George Gibian and H.W. Tjalsma (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1976), pp. 49-64 (pp. 59-60).
[3] Ibid., pp. 57, 62.
[4] See Stephen Hutchings, *Russian Modernism: Transfiguration of the Everyday* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

This chapter will replicate Carden's application of the spatial theory with a new accent on any specifically apocalyptic significance that can be gleaned from particular texts and, when available, statements made elsewhere by their writers.

Andrei Belyi

> Русская поэзия, перебрасывая мост к религии, является соединительным звеном между трагическим миросозерцанием европейского человека и последней церковью верующих, сплотившихся для борьбы со Зверем.
> Русская поэзия <...> углубляется в мировую жизнь. Вопрос, ею поднятый, решается только преобразованием Земли и Неба в град Новый Иерусалим. Апокалипсис русской поэзии вызван приближением Конца Всемирной Истории. <...>
> Явись!
> Пора: мир созрел, как золотой, налившийся сладостью плод, мир тоскует без Тебя.
> Явись![5]
> [Russian poetry, throwing a bridge over to religion, represents a unifying link between the tragic worldview of the European man and the final church of the believers, rallied for the struggle with the Beast.
> Russian poetry <...> delves deeply into universal life. The question it raises can only be solved by the transformation of the Earth and Heaven into the city of New Jerusalem. The Apocalypse of Russian poetry is called by the approach of the End of Universal History. <...>
> Appear!
> It is time: the world has ripened, like a golden fruit filled with sweetness, the world yearns for You.
> Appear!]

The closing lines of Belyi's essay 'Apokalipsis v russkoi poezii' ['The Apocalypse in Russian Poetry'] (1905) exemplify an aesthetic apocalypticism evident throughout his career. His ascription of messianic significance to Russian literature and the implicit suggestion that Russian poetry (culminating in the Symbolists) can take some credit for the world's eschatological 'ripeness' locate this piece among the more unequivocal mission statements of religious Symbolism. Belyi is particularly pertinent to this project because beyond the symbolic language of apocalyptic intervention he seriously engages with the subject of time, and with the existential consequences of different perceptions of time.

We have already mentioned the way in which the poem *Christ is Risen* conceives of a post-Revolutionary synthesis of the earthly and that which is 'outside time.' There are instances throughout Belyi's oeuvre of the author approaching spiritual-

[5] Andrei Belyi, 'Apokalipsis v russkoi poezii', in his *Simvolizm kak miroponimanie* (Moscow: Respublika, 1994), pp. 408-17 (p. 417).

existential problems through this issue of time. For example, the poems 'Uspokoenie' ['Calming'] (1905) and 'Vremia' ['Time'] (1909), from the collection *Goremyki* [*Unlucky Ones*], contemplate its constant flow and the world's consequent repetitiveness and transience.[6] However, more significant to this chapter is the fact that ideas about time are central to Belyi's first prose experiments. While much of Belyi's poetry principally operates on a conceptual plane (descending into rhetoric in works such as *Christ is Risen*), his greatest achievements – and legacy to the next generation – reside in translating poetic effects such as symbol and juxtaposition into prose narrative.

Belyi's four prose 'symphonies' were mainly written between 1900 and 1902, when the author, in his early twenties, had only just resolved on a career in literature.[7] As their classification implies, they are works of radical formal innovation, aspiring to extra-literary, musical structures. In parallel they reflect the vigorous philosophical world of Belyi and the milieux he describes. The task of charting this terrain is assisted by his liberal name-dropping, of which the next sentence is not an isolated example:

> Все собирающиеся в этом доме, помимо Канта, Платона и Шопенгауера, прочитали Соловьева, заигрывали с Ницше и придавали великое значение индусской философии.[8]
> [Everyone gathered in the house had, besides Kant, Plato and Schopenhauer, read Solov'ev, flirted with Nietzsche and attached great significance to Hindu philosophy.]

Among Belyi's philosophical concerns, the meaning of time for human existence is a prominent theme. Konstantin Mochulskii describes the ('northern') *First Symphony* as a 'struggle between light and darkness, bright eternity and dark time.'[9] The *Second Symphony*, subtitled 'dramatic', was written in 1901 and published the following year. It presents time perceived cyclically, through the prism of the myth of eternal recurrence, and contrasts this with an apocalyptic view, in which the meaning of time consists in its end. (As we will see in chapter four, Platonov's *Chevengur* revolves around the same opposition, and Belyi's *Second Symphony* is a likely influence on the later writer.)

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[6] Blok, *Dialog poetov*, pp. 332-34, 330-32.
[7] The fourth was begun in 1902 but revisited in 1906-07.
[8] Andrei Belyi, 'Simfoniia (2-aia dramaticheskaia)', in his *Sochineniia v dvukh tomakh*, ed. by V. Piskunov (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1990), I, 273-376 (p. 311).
[9] Konstantin Mochulskii, *Andrei Bely: His Life and Works*, trans. by N. Szalavitz (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1977), p. 26.

Belyi seeks to convey these conceptual currents not only thematically, but also (even primarily) through the effects of structure. As Mochulskii declares, 'the content corresponds to the form'.[10] This provides a useful illustration of how a 'spatial' style (which, as we saw, Frank associates with a rather vague yearning to transcend the temporal) can be deployed as part of a conscious representation of time. The *Second Symphony* comprises four parts, each of which is constructed from a series of short sections, in turn consisting of numbered single- or two-sentence units.[11] Contiguous monads are often narratologically unconnected (subverting the sequential logic implied by Belyi's numeration) and the sections themselves constantly shift the narrative gaze. While certain plot lines do emerge – the democrat's love for the lady referred to as 'skazka' [the fairytale], the frustration of Sergei Musatov's mystical hopes, a visit to Russia by Max Nordau – the juxtaposition of unrelated fragments generally evokes timelessness or simultaneity.

1. Темнело. На востоке была синяя дымка, грустно туманная и вечно скучная, а с бульвара неслись звуки оркестра.
2. Каждый точно сбросил с плеч свою скуку, а мальчишки и девчонки бегали по улицам с букетиками незабудок.
3. В тот час по всем направлениям можно было встретить угрюмых самокатчиков. В поте лица они работали ногами и сгибали спины; они угрожали звонками и таращили глаза, перегоняя друг друга.
4. В тот час философ возвращался домой своей деланной походкой, неся под мышкой *Критику чистого разума.*
<...>
10. А над пустым местом из открытого окна раздавались плачевные звуки: «Аууу, аууу».
11. Это консерваторка пробовала голос.[12]

[1. It grew dark. In the east there was a blue haze, melancholically misty and eternally boring, and sounds from an orchestra drifted from the avenue.
2. Each person verily cast off his boredom from his shoulders, and boys and girls ran about the streets with posies of forget-me-nots.
3. At that time in every direction one could come across morose bicyclists. Sweaty-faced, they worked with legs and bent their backs; they threatened with noises and goggled, overtaking one another.
4. At that time a philosopher was returning home with his affected gait, under his arm carrying the *Critique of Pure Reason.*
<...>
10. And through an open window above an empty place mournful sounds were emitted: "A-uuu, a-uuu."
11. It was a conservatoire student testing her voice.]

[10] Ibid., p. 34.
[11] V. Piskunov's and S. Piskunova's commentary points out that such numeration occurs in both the Bible (therefore the Apocalypse) and a more recent work concerned with time and eternity: Nietzsche's *Also sprach Zarathustra.* Belyi, *Sochineniia*, I, 680, note 1.
[12] Belyi, *Sochineniia*, I, 277.

This has obvious affinities with some of the features prevalent throughout modernism mentioned in the previous chapter: the perspective-theme of the city and the significance of the instant of time, both of which lend themselves to the aesthetic of spatialization. However, just as we noted the propensity of fragmented forms to complement diverse purposes, so Belyi's structure complements contrasting dynamics.

V. Piskunov remarks upon Belyi's use of the Wagnerian device of leitmotif (appropriate enough to a philosophical background of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche).[13] For instance, references to Kant's *Critique*, such as in the above example, reappear a further six times in the first part. Where protagonists appear in fragments, linear character-development is circumscribed, a consequence of the brevity imposed by the structure. One such example is Max Nordau, whose notions of the degeneration of Western civilization and approach of a new epoch are highly relevant to Belyi's subject matter. However, the narrator tends not to elaborate on these associations, which one can assume would have been obvious enough to his narrow and erudite early readership. Rather, Nordau is compressed to an ironically banal motif, wherein his physicality is emphasized, rather than his thought. We first encounter him asleep on a train to Moscow, then arriving at the station, where he murmurs '"Die alte Moskau"' and fails to understand what the cabbies are offering: a foreigner.[14] The next time he appears he has already delivered his speech and been honoured at a dinner.

> сегодня прогремел Макс Нордау, бичуя вырождение; а теперь он сидел в Эрмитаже весь красный от волнения и выпитого шампанского.[15]
> [today Max Nordau had fulminated about degeneration; and now he was sitting in the Hermitage, all red from emotion and consumed champagne.]

Because Nordau is little more than a static caricature, his reappearances after intervals – and not his ideas – are the principal means by which he is actively incorporated into the text's discourse on temporal cycles.

If the theme of recurrence is mirrored by the repetition of motifs, our awareness of this evolves, in accordance with Frank's observation, not from our linear reading,

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[13] Piskunov, V. '"Skvoz' ogon' dissonansa"', in Andrei Belyi, *Sochineniia v dvukh tomakh* (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1990), I, 5-42 (p. 11).
[14] Belyi, *Sochineniia*, I, 300, 304.
[15] Ibid., I, 307.

which presents us with a succession of disjunctions, but from retrospective 'reconstructions' of larger portions of text. Indeed, Mochulskii's characterization of the technique of the *Second Symphony* –

> The method of 'juxtaposition' suggests the technique of Impressionist painting; the colours are placed side by side without half-tones and transitions.[16]

– bears a strong resemblance to Frank's discussion of Proust, whose work is also compared to impressionism, with 'pure tones without mixing, blended by the eye of the spectator'.[17]

More troublesome is the question of whether the spatial attributes of the text produce a 'transcendent' effect, as in Frank's model. A clue to the author's intention can be found in Belyi's preamble. Having stated that the symphony operates on three levels of meaning – musical, satirical, and philosophical [идейный смысл] – he makes the claim that 'Совмещение в одном отрывке или стихе всех трех сторон ведет к символизму' [the combination in one fragment or verse of all three aspects leads to symbolism].[18] Bearing in mind the ambitions invested in the symbol (and Symbolism) at that time, Belyi seems to attach profound significance to the composite meaning of this multi-faceted work. If this is so, he aspires to succeed in art where his protagonist Musatov fails in his fictional life: to enact or represent transformation by formal effect rather than narrative depiction.

Piskunov associates Belyi's juxtaposition of fragments with a higher, timeless reality against which time is contrasted:

> трактовка темы «возврата» <...> своеобразно резонирует в пространственно-временном космосе 2-й «симфонии», а важнейшая ее лейтмотивная тема – *уничтожение* времени и пространства, этих «фикций» человеческого сознания, обреченных на исчезновение перед грядущи возвратом Вечности. Но если нет времени, то нет и причинно-следственных связей, организующих события в их временной последовательности, иными словами, нет фабулы. «Симфонии» Белого, особенно 2-я, ориентированы на разрушение традиционного повествования.[19]
>
> [the treatment of the subject of 'return' <...> resounds distinctively in the spatio-temporal realm of the 2nd 'symphony', but the most important leitmotif is the *obliteration* of time and space, these 'fictions' of the human consciousness, which are

[16] Mochulskii, p. 33.
[17] Joseph Frank, 'Spatial Form in Modern Literature', in his *The Widening Gyre* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1963), pp. 3-62 (p. 25).
[18] Belyi, *Sochineniia*, I, 273.
[19] Piskunov, 12.

> doomed to disappear in the face of the approaching return of Eternity. But if there is no time, then neither are there cause-effect links organizing events in their temporal sequence; in other words, there is no plot. Belyi's 'symphonies', especially the second, are orientated toward the destruction of traditional narration.]

The critic S. Askol'dov, a contemporary of the author and his ally in metaphysics, takes a step further by claiming that the work succeeds in embodying the symphonic harmony of the noumenal world: this higher perspective unifies the chaos of the parallel, unconnected plotlines.[20] Roger Keys rightly questions this view. He notes that while Belyi clearly intended his kaleidoscopic themes and variations to resound meaningfully at a higher level of musical abstraction, the implied author's intimations of cosmic harmony are hardly sufficient to resolve and unify the work's disharmonies.[21] On the other hand, Askol'dov's account illustrates the extent to which Belyi's theurgic aims influence the heterogeneous structure of the work (an aspect which Keys tends to understate in his argument that Belyi's modernism is at odds with those goals).

Belyi thus provides an example of the spatial style that can be related to a more specific (apocalyptic) conception of time than Frank can identify among his West European modernists. However, if the *Second Symphony* demonstrates how our paradigm can succeed in linking formal and thematic aspects, it also illustrates some inherent difficulties. Where Piskunov relates the work's disruption of sequence to its intuition of the realm of eternity, Mochulskii equally convincingly stresses the way in which Belyi's device evokes the senselessness, disconnectedness, banality and 'eternal boredom' involved in the flow of time.

> In the first part momentary photographs of Moscow on a hot spring day are presented. By recording 'events' and 'incidents' occurring simultaneously on the streets and in the homes of the city without selection, Belyi in reality reveals the mystical horror of the temporal process.[22]

Moreover, the two scholars do not differ substantially in their thematic readings of the text. Both recognize the central distinction between time and timelessness, and their negative and positive connotations. Even where Mochulskii believes that the fragmented style reveals a 'mystical horror', he also finds that Belyi's

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[20] S. Askol'dov, 'Tvorchestvo Andreia Belogo', *Literaturnaia mysl'*, 1 (1923), 73-90 (pp. 74-75), cited in Roger Keys, *The Reluctant Modernist: Andrei Belyi and the Development of Russian Fiction 1902-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), pp. 145-46.
[21] Keys, p. 146.
[22] Mochulskii, p. 34.

juxtapositional technique 'produces an impression of brilliant multi-colour, sharp contrasts, unexpected dissonance,' which perhaps sounds revelatory, but scarcely horrific. While both commentaries make a strong case for apprehending Belyi's use of structure as part of his treatment of the theme of time, they also emphasize the fact that abstract literary form, like musical form (to adopt the author's analogy), is resistant to literal thematic interpretation.

This is not to concede that no conclusions can be drawn. Perhaps Belyi's symphony would yield more adequate answers given closer attention than possible in this study. A more comprehensive analysis of the work might reveal different typologies of juxtaposition and patterns of distribution. For instance, Keys notes that the plot structure becomes more traditional and coherent after the introduction of Musatov into the narrative.[23] Furthermore, the fourth part, which deals most of all with the potential Solov'evian, apocalyptic resolution, has an air of greater urgency in comparison with the simultaneous-static Moscow scenes quoted above. Its opening juxtaposition of consecutive seasons accelerates narrative time and thereby introduces a new note of dynamism:

> 1. Лето улетело на крыльях времени. Унеслось в тоскующую даль.
> 2. Проползла осень. И все, к чему ни коснулась она, облетело, пролило туманные слезы.
> 3. Старушка зима уже давно таскалась вдоль российских низменностей; шамкала и грозилась.[24]
> [1. Summer flew away on the wings of time. It was carried away into the yearning distance.
> 2. Autumn crawled by. And all she touched was sent flying about and shed misty tears.
> 3. Old lady winter had long been hanging around Russia's lowlands, she mumbled and made threatening gestures.]

However, this brief discussion of the work has highlighted the point that any inference depends on formal patterns and content in combination. If Belyi had not established the thematic context of the work through references to the Revelation of St. John the Divine, time, eternity, mystics and philosophers, Mochulskii and Piskunov would scarcely have placed his fragmentation in those contexts by themselves.

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[23] Keys, p. 149.
[24] Belyi, *Sochineniia*, I, 350.

Since the influence of pre-Revolutionary writers on the next generation is part of the rationale for this chapter, a word should be added about the extent to which Belyi's *Second Symphony* was known. The original publication (Moscow: Skorpion, 1902) attracted (negative) reviews beyond Symbolist circles and a positive one from Blok (in *Novyi put'*, April 1903).[25] The work may have faded from recollection over the following years, but was republished in 1917 (Moscow: V.V. Pashukanis) as the fourth volume of a projected collected works (of which only one other volume saw the light). Moreover, Belyi's early prose experiments remained sufficiently well-known in the 1930s to be grotesquely parodied by Daniil Kharms.[26] Therefore, it is certainly likely that Babel', Platonov and Zoshchenko were familiar with the *Second Symphony*.

However, if they were not aware of that work, they were almost certain to have encountered Belyi's mature writing, in particular his masterpiece *Petersburg*, in which the techniques and ideas nascent in the symphonies acquired greater sophistication. Although the lesser conceptual complexity of the *Second Symphony* renders it a starker illustration of a relationship between spatial form and Symbolist attitudes to time, *Petersburg* also responds well to our paradigm. Given its massive and lasting impact on other writers, it is worth mentioning aspects in which it does so.

Though it contains a stronger sense of linear narrative, *Petersburg* is also constructed from what are for a novel relatively small units. This enables Belyi to frequently shift perspective between different narrative strands. Interconnections between fragments grow more apparent retrospectively, and this reveals certain motifs running throughout the work. In this respect the novel can be considered another work that relies on the spatial perspective (which, as in previous examples, feeds upon the polyphony of the city). It is more difficult to relate the consequent effect to abstract notions of time as in the *Second Symphony*. Nevertheless, *Petersburg*'s interface with atemporal realms – the apocalypse and particularly the intertextual space of Russian literary eschatological mythology – and the manner in which the ticking bomb resounds in the prose rhythms of the latter part of the work,

[25] See commentary in Belyi, *Sochineniia*, I, 679.
[26] Daniil Kharms, *Daniil Kharms*, ed. by A. Avdeev, 2 vols (Moscow: Viktori, 1994), I, 292, and II, 112-13. Kharms's parodies of the symphonies will be briefly discussed in the final chapter.

intensifying apocalyptic expectation, both support this probability. A comprehensive 'spatial' analysis of *Petersburg* would consume a whole thesis. Yet within these confines we can at least state that it is a second text in which Belyi exploits the formal, 'musical' properties of language with the aim of reinforcing apocalyptic content. On the other hand, since the novel places far more emphasis on describing the negative that necessitates apocalyptic intercession than on the positive itself, a fuller examination of the work would perhaps arrive at conclusions closer to Kermode's than Frank's.

Aleksandr Blok

Another Symbolist of towering importance for the post-Revolutionary generation is Belyi's friend and rival, Aleksandr Blok. Although Blok was a poet, the impact of his poetry and essays on later writers of both verse and prose was profound. Discussing him as a part of the prehistory of our paradigm is further justified by the fact that the period under consideration was one in which the boundaries between prose and poetry shifted. This moreover represents another parallel with Frank's theory, which proceeds from T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, and attaches importance to Stéphane Mallarmé and French Symbolism.

Although Blok's emphasis is more inclined toward poetic intuition and less toward philosophical formulae in comparison with Belyi, conceptions of time do crop up in his eschatologism. As with Belyi, the need for apocalyptic resolution often stems from a negative impression of current spiritual conditions in time. The essay 'Bezvremen'e' ['Stagnation'; etymologically 'without-time-ness'] (1906) explores the existential crisis of modernity, in which feelings are dulled and people have ceased to yearn for the Golden Age of the past and paradise of the future.[27] In this sense, the condition he describes bears some resemblance to Kermode's 'immanent apocalypse', in which mystical, absolute beginnings and endings have receded. Blok's assertion, occurring twice, that 'времени больше нет' [time no longer exists] relates to this plight of stagnation, not to Blok's eschatological desire to escape it.[28] This reinforces the impression from the *Second Symphony* that the concept or simulation of timelessness have dualistic possibilities. Also echoing

[27] Blok, *Dialog poetov*, pp. 364-78.
[28] Ibid., pp. 368, 372.

Belyi, Blok relates the threat of senselessness and lack of change in time with the theme of cyclical return. The poem 'Noch', ulitsa, fonar', apteka' ['Night, street, lantern, apothecary'], dated 10th October 1912, revisits the subject of stagnation:

> Ночь, улица, фонарь, аптека,
> Бессмысленный и тусклый свет.
> Живи еще хоть четверть века –
> Всё будет так. Исхода нет.
> Умрешь – начнешь опять сначала
> И повторится всё, как встарь:
> Ночь, ледяная рябь канала,
> Аптека, улица, фонарь.[29]
> [Night, a street, a lantern, an apothecary,
> A pointless and dim light.
> Live a good quarter century more –
> All will be the same. There is no end.
> You'll die – you'll start anew from the beginning
> And all will be repeated as of old:
> The night, the icy ripple of the canal,
> The apothecary, the street and the lantern.]

Like Belyi, Blok employs repetition to convey his theme, although here the conventional device of poetic refrain dovetails unobtrusively with the content, whereas, translated into prose, it seems radical.

On the other hand, Blok's oeuvre contains numerous visions of apocalyptic resolution. For example, between these two statements, in 1908, Blok composed poems prophesying an imminent second battle of Kulikovo, firmly belonging to the national messianic tradition. The otherworldly imagery leaves little doubt that the liberation to be achieved will be spiritual rather than military, and the 'грядущий день' [coming day] will usher in a transcendent realm: 'не слышно грома битвы чудной' [the thunder of the wondrous battle is inaudible], 'плеск и трубы лебедей' [the splash and trumpeting of swans].[30]

However, among Blok's apocalyptic statements the most significant to this project reside in his responses to the Revolution: his poem *The Twelve*, and the essay 'Intelligentsiia i revoliutsiia' ['The Intelligentsia and the Revolution'], both dated January 1918.[31]

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[29] Aleksandr Blok, *Izbrannye sochineniia*, ed. by A. Turkov (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1988), pp. 312-13.
[30] Ibid., p. 435.
[31] Ibid., pp. 535-45; Blok, *Dialog poetov*, pp. 415-25.

Having pointed out that Russian 'ornamentalist' prose borrowed much from poetry, one can add that *The Twelve* appears prosaic in its irregular lines and rhythms, and its incorporation of non-poetic language – from colloquialisms (one respect in which Blok has edged toward Maiakovskii) and 'low' folk poetry to political slogans and liturgical sources:

Ты лети, буржуй, воробышком!
Выпью кровушку
За зазнобушку,
Чернобровушку...
Упокой, господи, душу рабы твоея...
Скучно![32]
[Fly like a sparrow, bourgeois!
I'll drink a bit a blood
To my sweetheart,
Dark-browed one...
Grant repose, Lord, to the soul of Thy servant...
Boring!]

One might imagine that the 'prosaic' and modern manner in which Blok deals with a spectrum of experience amplified the resonance of the poem, and its mystical elements, for younger writers uncomfortable with the Solov'evian lexicon of transcendence.

The introductory chapter touched upon the apocalyptic framework in which *The Twelve* places the Revolution. Petrograd is caught up in a universal storm: 'Ветер, ветер – На всем божьем свете!' [The wind, the wind – Over all God's world!].[33] The suggestion that the current disarray and suffering can be subjected to a higher order appears with the final image of Christ, positioned at the head of the Red Guards, who are ignorant of (and even hostile toward) him. This is as if to endorse Rozanov's conception of the Revolution as a new religion, and to suggest that its apostles are unaware of its deeper purpose, perhaps determined by superhuman forces. The previous chapter also alluded to some of the variations on these themes, for example by Ivanov-Razumnik, Belyi, Esenin, Remizov and Pil'niak. *The Twelve* made the deepest impact among works belonging to that trend, and thus made a powerful contribution to perpetuating the association of the Revolution with Russian messianism.

[32] Blok, *Sochineniia*, p. 542.
[33] Ibid., p. 535.

Our primary intention here is to contemplate how the construction of *The Twelve* relates to this mythic context. Since the work consists of a range of voices, rather than representing a consistent lyrical narrator, the poet's function is invested more strongly than usual in 'editing' verbal images. Blok intersperses snatches of narrative, conversation and description contained within an urban space, which can be discerned as Petrograd from the political references and one to the 'невская башня' [the Neva Tower].[34] Thus, as remarked in works by Joyce and Belyi (although Eliot's London in *Waste Land* might be a closer analogy), the weakness of the temporal dimension is accentuated by the poem's defined spatial coordinates. Most of the elements in the text have no direct causal relationships with one another, being images of the Revolution-wrought present: the priest, the bourgeois, the guards, prostitutes, ice and banners. On the other hand, a simple plot about the twelve Red Guards / apostles does unfold among the fragments, encompassing Pet'ka's revenge on the unfaithful Kat'ka and culminating in the revelation that they are following the image of Christ. Therefore, the poem could be said to convey both a sense of simultaneity and a faint narrative line.

The suppression of time in *The Twelve* does not necessarily validate all the assumptions that have been made about spatial texts. In some respects, the juxtaposition of small units of meaning serves to viscerally emphasize a sense of dislocation. There are sharp contrasts in register and imagery, as exhibited in the example above (where the adjacency of high and low again brings Maiakovskii to mind). Blok's editing dramatizes the central metaphor of the elemental snowstorm. His rapid cuts between images and voices evokes the limited visibility within the blizzard; the polyphony of *The Twelve* makes it difficult to achieve a complete or lucid picture. Moreover, if this polyphony evokes the chaos of the apocalypse carried on the universal gale, then the ideological incompatibility of contiguous images (which is reflected in derision and insults) conveys its polarization and its maximalism. This aspect, it seems, enabled Blok to perceive the Revolution as sublime and absolute. Later, in Remizov's *Whirlwind Russia* and Pil'niak's *The Naked Year*, this sort of technique accompanies comparable approaches to the

[34] Ibid., p. 542.

Revolution as an elemental force, also with the result of transmitting the disjointed, incomprehensible nature of experience.[35]

Alternatively, however, one can contend that a spatial unity binds the disparate text. The final words of *The Twelve* – 'Впереди – Исус Христос' [Ahead is Jesus Christ] – force the reader to re-interpret the whole poem anew.[36] This last jolt in fact reinforces the impulse extant in any spatial text to reconstruct it according to counter-linear patterns. In this instance, not only does the key trigger the reader's retrospective reading of the whole, but makes the poem's eschatological context explicit. This reveals that the incompatible elements are all caught up in, and stirred up by, the storm, to which they are related as its unsuspecting agents or victims. The oppositions arising in the course of the text are not to be resolved according to a logic embedded in its linear sequence; rather, the irresolution engendered by the pattern itself proves to be a condition of the crisis.

This answerability to Frank's spatial theory raises questions about the role of time, or rather its suppression, in *The Twelve*. Given the poem's apocalyptic context, could it be argued that Blok intends to depict, through his suppression of the flow of time, the transition of history into eternity? Unfortunately, the text gives little cause to ascribe the effect of timelessness so literally to a representation of the end of time. However, it would not be contentious to venture that its constriction of linear patterns creates a frozen space, in which the marching of the twelve, the only dynamic constituent, strikes one as portentously distinct (especially in the light of the ultimate revelation). In other words, Blok's structure creates temporal effects which complement the eschatological context, although we cannot prove that this was intentional.

A further issue derived from comparing Frank's and Kermode's theories is whether the effect of fragmentation is positively or negatively charged, transcending and

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[35] Concerning the question of influence, Sergei Hackel and Alex Shane point out similarities between Blok's poem and Remizov's short texts 'Slovo o pogibeli Russkoi Zemli' ['Tale of the Ruin of the Russian Land'] and 'Krasnoe znamia' ['Red Banner'], both of which appeared in the summer of 1917 (that is, before *The Twelve*) and were subsequently interpolated into *Whirlwind Russia*. See Sergei Hackel, *The Poet and the Revolution: Aleksandr Blok's 'The Twelve'* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), pp. 171-77, and Alex M. Shane, 'Rhythm without Rhyme: The Poetry of Alexej Remizov', in *Aleksej Remizov: Approaches to a Protean Writer*, ed. by Greta N. Slobin (Columbus, OH: Slavica, 1987), pp. 217-36.

[36] Blok, *Sochineniia*, p. 545.

unifying or descriptive. Once a reader has eliminated the layers of subjective response, there is little solid to grasp. We have seen that *The Twelve* depicts the Revolutionary moment in its paradoxical linguistic totality, an omniscient perspective appropriate to the scale of the apocalypse. Furthermore, Blok offers a revelation of wholeness: the apocalyptic context posits interconnections between incongruous things. This unification might be considered revelatory (although perhaps not to a sceptic about the super-historical truth of the Revolution). On the other hand, the poem is not a didactic portrait. It depicts the suffering, privation and contradictions of the critical instant. Therefore, while it hardly inhabits 'conditions of reality unprotected by myth', as Kermode demands, its fragments do incorporate life's 'disparateness, complexity and breadth'. This perhaps indicates the possibility, envisaged earlier, for aspects of both theories to coexist in a given text.

Contemporaneous with *The Twelve*, Blok's 'The Intelligentsia and the Revolution' illuminates the ideological background to that poem, and also sheds some light on the aesthetics of Symbolism over the preceding years. The piece is a polemic with members of the intelligentsia who embraced the radical innovations of modernism but have rejected the Revolution. For this project the particularly interesting aspect of the argument is the way it discusses the relationship between literature and life. Blok treats the world and the text as equivalents, seeing modernist art (Russian Symbolism) now replicated in reality:

> Поток предчувствий <...> опять шумит, и в шуме его – новая музыка.
> Мы любили эти дисоннансы, эти ревы, эти звоны, эти неожиданные переходы... в оркестре. Но, если мы их *действительно любили*, а не только щекотали свои нервы в модном театральном зале после обеда, мы должны слушать и любить те же звуки теперь, когда они вылетают из мирового оркестра; и, слушая, понимать, что это – о том же, все о том же.[37]
> [The stream of presentiments <...> is again making a noise, and in its noise is a new music.
> We loved these dissonances, these roars, these sounds, these unexpected transitions... in the orchestra. But if we *really loved* them, and didn't just tickle our nerves in a fashionable theatre after dinner, we must listen to and love those same sounds now, when they fly out of the world's orchestra; and, listening, we must understand that it is about same thing, everything is about one and the same.]

Certain inferences can be made from this passage. When Blok 'listens' to the Revolution he identifies formal properties in this moment of crisis. These echo the stylistic qualities of the literature that anticipated the Apocalypse-Revolution (and,

[37] Blok, *Dialog poetov*, p. 417.

one can confidently add, influenced those of *The Twelve*). This statement thus not only associates Russian modernism with mystical aims, but suggests that specific stylistic qualities – dissonances, unexpected transitions – are directly representative of apocalyptic experience (then as prophecy, now as observation). Blok's retrospective comment has some value for our assessment of fragmentation and juxtaposition in pre-Revolutionary Symbolist literature, and more still with regard to understanding his contemporary output. It also offers a template for future writers seeking to depict the Revolution as an extra-historical event.[38]

Similar associations between art and life appear in Belyi's essay 'Revoliutsiia i kul'tura' ['The Revolution and Culture'], actually written before the October Revolution, in June 1917.[39] Belyi also regards social turmoil and the 'aesthetic revolution' of modernism as parts of a single phenomenon.

> Революционный период начала истекшего века бежит по Европе в волне романтизма; и наше время проходит перед нами в волне символизма.[40]
> [The revolutionary period of the beginning of the previous century raced across Europe in a wave of Romanticism; and our time passes before us in a wave of Symbolism.]

Like Blok, he dwells on the appearance of new forms as an indication of significant times:

> Революционная эра текущей эпохи себя начинает в искусстве разрывами сложенной, натуралистической формы: импрессионизм начинает разрыв, не сознавая своей разрушительной миссии и полагая, что он утверждает натуру; но он распыляется в атомы футуризмом, кубизмом, супрематизмом и прочими новейшими формами.[41]
> [The revolutionary era of the current epoch begins in art with the explosions in established, naturalistic form: impressionism begins the explosion, without recognizing its destructive mission and supposing that it affirms nature; but then it is scattered into atoms by futurism, cubism, suprematism and the other newest forms.]

Read together, Blok's and Belyi's essays provide evidence of an awareness around the time of the Revolution of the way modernist form could reflect eschatological processes perceived to be occurring in Russia. Another text which exhibits such a

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[38] The capacity to recognize modernist forms in life is not limited to Russian mysticism. Gertrude Stein, for instance, saw the First World War as 'cubist': lacking centre, a single subject and a background. This reminds one how much modernist art had borrowed from modern life in the first place. See Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Time and Space: 1880-1918* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 292.
[39] Blok, *Dialog poetov*, pp. 471-89.
[40] Ibid., p. 479.
[41] Ibid., p. 480.

consciousness is Aleksei Remizov's *Whirlwind Russia*. The storm or whirlwind in which the nation (and therefore the writer) is caught is a recurring metaphor in the work – and also its structuring principle.

Aleksei Remizov

Remizov's vision of Russia beset by uncontrollable, supernatural forces bears the mark of his close association with the *skify*, particularly Blok, at the genesis of *Whirlwind Russia*.[42] Although first published as a whole in 1927, the work grew out of separate shorter texts, and numerous sections appeared in Russian and émigré publications between 1917 and 1924.[43] Its formal heterogeneity consists in the juxtaposition not only of short sections differing in subject and register, but also fragments of prose and blank verse. (Indeed, the work, straddling the boundary between free verse and poeticized prose, is a good example of the way in which the devices key to the structures under discussion here were absorbed from poetry by Russian modernist prose.)[44]

Motifs from Russian eschatologism and the 'little man'-narrator's incomplete view of great events place the structural whirlwind in context. In 'Tale of the Ruin of the Russian Land', the first part of *Whirlwind Russia* to be published, Remizov laments the Revolution's destruction of Old Rus. Russian messianism provides a means to make sense of it and overcome it:

> И одно утешение, одна у меня надежда: буду терпеливо нести бремя дней, очищу сердце и ум и, если суждено, восстану в Светлый день.
> Русский народ, настанет Светлый день.
> Слышишь храп коня?
> Безумный ездок! хочет прыгнуть за море из желтых туманов, – он сокрушил старую Русь, он подымет и новую из пропада.
> Слышу трепет крыльев над головой.
> Это новая Русь –

[42] This discourse of course has direct connections with notions of an elemental force imposing Eastern spirituality prominent much earlier in Symbolist-orientated circles. The image of the whirlwind itself crops up (twice) as far back as 'The Apocalypse in Russian Poetry': Belyi, 'Apokalipsis v russkoi poezii', pp. 409, 410. Hackel, pp. 171-77, discusses Remizov's ambivalent relationship with the generally pro-revolutionary *skify* in greater depth.
[43] Greta N. Slobin, *Remizov's fictions, 1900-1921* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1991), p. 128. Despite its partial publication abroad, the work strongly influenced modernists in Russia, such as Zamiatin, Vsevolod Ivanov, Pil'niak and the Serapion Brothers (see Slobin, p. 152).
[44] See the discussion of Remizov's free verse in relation to the development of his rhythmic prose in Shane, pp. 217-36.

Русский народ! Настанет Светлый день![45]
[And there is one comfort, I have one hope: I shall patiently carry my burden of days,
I shall cleanse my heart and mind and, if it is ordained, I shall rise on the Radiant day.
Russian people, the Radiant day will come.
Do you hear a horse's snort?
The insane rider! wants to leap out of the yellow mists over the sea, – he has smashed
old Rus, and he will raise a new one from its ruins.
I hear the trembling of wings overhead.
It is the new Rus –
Russian people! The Radiant day will come!]

There are many allusions to literary apocalypticism (such as the reference to Pushkin's and Belyi's bronze horseman in the above passage) as well as to the simple, suffering people, in whom the folkloric sources of the messianic tradition are sustained. The first section of the complete text, 'Babushka' ['Grandmother'], introduces such voices, one declaring that Kiev is 'не город, рай-город!' [not a city, but paradise-city!], and the eponymous grandmother claiming to have seen the Antichrist: an infant who whined throughout his Christening.[46]

Much of *Whirlwind Russia* is spent chronicling the author's *byt* at this sub-historical perspective, in the company of the ordinary people he brushes against and his cultural friends. This anecdotal level illustrates the personal privations of the time. The passage quoted above exemplifies a more poetic and mythic level of response to Russia's plight. There are also lyrical meditations on Russia's literary heritage. These strata are interspersed and merged throughout the text. In addition, Remizov inserts various documents, such as newspaper cuttings and artistic manifestos.

Fragmentation also occurs on a smaller scale. Within short subsections, Remizov frequently switches between various images or miniature narrative strands, often repeating key phrases verbatim several times. The apostrophes to the motherland in 'Tale of the Ruin of the Russian Land' are one example: 'Широкая раздольная Русь' [Broad free Rus] and variations on the phrase 'О моя обреченная родина' [O my doomed motherland].[47]

In a similar way to *The Twelve*, one can see how a polyphony built of non sequiturs (albeit often arranged in thematically related clusters) could convey the whirling

[45] Remizov, Aleksei, *Vzvikhrennaia Rus'*, ed. by S. Denisenko (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1991), p. 323.
[46] Ibid., p. 216.
[47] Ibid., pp. 318-21.

chaos of the apocalypse. A more challenging question is whether the disruption of consequential order and the repetitions can be literally associated with a mid-apocalyptic timelessness. As Greta Slobin has remarked, Remizov's earlier work displays a keen awareness of time, particularly manifested in his interest in cyclical forms and their expression in religious calendars and folkloric texts.[48] Hélène Sinany-MacLeod discusses the approach to time in *Whirlwind Russia* and shows how the 'срывы в тоне и уровне' [disruptions in tone and level] facilitate a contrapuntal treatment of time.[49] On one hand, the text is a chronicle, proceeding in the chronological order by which its elements were experienced or thought. However, Sinany-MacLeod draws attention to the fact that this linear movement is rarely marked by dates or specific historical occurrences. Often, indeed, a point in time is designated by a church festival: that is, located in a cyclical scheme of time.[50] Another alternative to linear time resides in the separate axis of Remizov's inner life, associated with imagination and dreams. This realm is timeless in the sense of communing with a higher reality, and also in its ability to preserve the past and mix it with the present.[51] However, Sinany-MacLeod neglects to discuss the relevance of the apocalypse to the subject of time, despite Remizov's hints at this theme, such as:

> И время пропало, нет его, кончилось.[52]
> [And time has disappeared, it no longer exists, it has finished.]

In the following excerpt the 'new time' subsequent to calendar reform is put into an apocalyptic context by its juxtaposition with eschatologically-charged folk discourse:

> На Ильин день по-старому, на Спасов по-новому, по царской воле и слову вышел русский народ со всех концов русской земли на ратное терпение и смерть.
> Русский народ по судьбинному суду оставил дом и пошел в пустыню.
> <...> Огненная мать-пустыня с постом, терпением, с унынием пустынным и искушением, и прекрасная мать-пустыня с дубравой и пустыней, с райскими птицами и цветами, какие вспоминаешь да во сне снятся, ты открыла по

[48] See Slobin, pp. 50-51, 99.
[49] Hélène Sinany-MacLeod, 'Strukturnaia kompozitsiia "Vzvikhrennoi Rusi"', in *Aleksej Remizov: Approaches to a Protean Writer* ed. by Greta N. Slobin (Columbus, OH: Slavica, 1987), pp. 237-44. (p. 238).
[50] Ibid., p. 237.
[51] Ibid., p. 239.
[52] Remizov, p. 321.

судьбинному суду врата и перед русским народом, перед землей-родиной на грозного Илью по-старому, на Спаса Милостивого по-новому![53]
[On the feast of Elijah by the old calendar, and the Saviour by the new, at the Tsar's will and the word, the Russian people from all ends of the Russian land came out to martial endurance and death.
The Russian people, by the will of fate, forsook its home and went into the wilderness.
<...> Fiery mother-wilderness with your fasting, endurance, with sorrow of the desert and temptation, and beautiful mother-wilderness with your leafy grove and wilderness, with your birds of paradise and flowers, what things you recall and see in dreams, by the will of fate you opened the gates before the Russian people as well, before the land-motherland on the feast of Elijah the Awesome by the old calendar, and the Gracious Saviour by the new.]

The visionary apocalypticism of Remizov's dream, related to present experience by those references to the new calendar, is complemented by the style. The pseudo-folkloric repetitiveness, with the circularity of the closing words and over-laden textures of the rambling last sentence (which aptly illustrates Carden's characterization of Remizov's prose as 'knotted, latticed, plaited'), frustrates the linear drive of grammar.[54] The technique very effectively conveys the confused temporality of dream, as well as perhaps suggesting the timelessness of the transcendental realm thereby accessed.

This example is in many ways a microcosm of the repetitions and unexpected juxtapositions that occur in *Whirlwind Russia* on a structural level. As such, the reader could legitimately wonder whether its broader impact were not only a depiction of the disorientation and strangeness of experience during a cataclysmic period, but more specifically one of a mid-apocalyptic dissolution of time.

Surveying (after Frank) the work as a whole, one sees that the whirlwind – metaphor for contemporary experience and structuring principle – lends meaning to the apparent disorder of the text, and offers the possibility that Russia's turmoil is part of a greater, apocalyptic scheme. In this respect, the spatial properties of the text evoke the timelessness associated with the cosmic storm. However, *Whirlwind Russia* lacks the symbolic unity of the *Second Symphony* or *The Twelve*. This is partly the result of its chronicle form, which endows the text both with things that happen in succession, usually not destined to repeat themselves, and with the element of arbitrariness present in life: insofar as it is a genuine chronicle, it cannot

[53] Ibid., p. 230.
[54] Carden, 'Ornamentalism', p. 59.

be as planned as the other two works were.[55] Since the author is thus in less of a position to intervene in his work, one can perhaps not be so ambitious in pursuit of comprehensive interpretations. Apart from this, the greater disparateness of Remizov's epic chimes with his stronger despair at the Revolution and his associated ambivalence toward its higher significance.

The above-quoted extracts exemplify another aspect of Remizov's work, which Carden compares with the spatial theory. He 'shares in one of the most astonishing accomplishments of Modernism – the conquest of time, not in the mystical sense sought by the Symbolists, but in a cultural sense through the absorption and re-creation in new art forms of cultures which are distant in space or time.'[56] The archaistic pathos which Remizov enlists for his more lyrical passages also has ramifications for our perception of time. Where the 'latticed' intricacy of the text makes it possible to stop time by 'doubling back' as often as desired, this medieval voice, mediated through avant-garde sensibilities and thus speaking at once for Petrine and Bolshevik Russia, represents a complex of points in time. Such a language, making ancient and modern equivalent, thus carries an air of extra-temporality. Remizov thereby performs a kind of spatialization not dependent on the arrangement of words (in addition to one which is), but upon the multiple strata within their signification. This technique is of course also appropriate to the apocalyptic subtext of *Whirlwind Russia*. Contrary to the implication of Carden's statement, the absorption of distant cultures does not conflict with mystical approaches to the conquest of time, and Remizov's syncretism of modern and archaic sources has numerous counterparts in Symbolism.

Although modernist primitivism is not the subject of this project, its juxtaposition of present and past perhaps responds to the same impulse to unify (and thus arrest) time that Frank's spatialization does.[57] This insight may be useful with regard to placing the fragmentation of a given work in context. If Remizov provides an example of the concurrence of primitivism with fragmentation, juxtapositions and repetitions, Russian Futurism is another.

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[55] One recalls that various sections of *Whirlwind Russia* were published before the whole took shape.
[56] Carden, 'Ornamentalism', p. 58.
[57] Carden suggests an equivalence of primitivism and formal ornamentalism in Russian modernism. This has the advantage of revealing how often the two coincide (from Stravinskii and Kandinskii to Remizov) and the disadvantage of failing to clearly differentiate them.

Futurists

The poetry and prose of Velimir Khlebnikov frequently broach the subject of the writer's role in relation to time, often imparting his utopian notion of the power of language. In 'Truba marsian' ['Trumpet of the Martians'] (1916) he signs himself as '*Король времени Велимир 1-й*' [King of Time Velimir I], and in *Zangezi* (1922) we encounter the lines: 'Хороший плотник часов / Я разобрал часы человечества' [A good clock carpenter / I have dismantled the clock of humanity].[58] His use of language is comparable with Remizov's in the way it bridges time: he creates neologisms, yet bases them upon the morphological roots of Russian buried deep in the past.

Khlebnikov also experiments with sequence, for example in his palindromic texts, which assault the apparently irreversible linguistic order. By folding the very sounds of signifiers back on themselves, Khlebnikov severs the link between language and causality more radically than other works so far considered. A line which may be read in either direction has a subversive relationship to time. The applicability of this device to apocalyptic discourse resides not only in this negation of time, but also in its particular form of reversal, with its implications of destroying order and returning to the point of creation – or void. The sinister and violent strains (images of the sword, knife, 'the axe's murmur', blood, and executioner) in Khlebnikov's treatment of palindrome suggest that he was conscious of this:

> Женам мечем манеж!
> Женам ман нож!
> Мед идем! Мед идем!
> Топора ропот
> У крови воркуй.
> Ура жару.
> Не даден.
> Мечам укажу мужа кумечем.
> <...>
> Меч, ала печаль, плачу палачем![59]

The long poem *Razin* (1920), from which the above is quoted, is a particularly good example because its indicated subject matter resonates with both a historical

[58] Velimir Khlebnikov, *Tvoreniia*, ed. by M. Poliakova (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1986), pp. 603, 496.
[59] Velimir Khlebnikov, 'Razin', in his *Sobranie sochinenii v 3 tomakh*, ed. by K.N. Petrov (St Petersburg: Akademicheskii proekt, 2001), II, 189-99 (pp. 189-90, 192). It is hoped that the failure to provide a translation will be excused.

uprising that had been embedded in the national eschatological imagination and the present revolutionary struggle.

Other avant-garde techniques of reprocessing language are more transferable to prose. Where Khlebnikov invents a language both ancient and futuristic by delving into its phonetic properties, Vladimir Maiakovskii's verse relies much more on juxtaposition.[60] His metaphors and compound images often knock together the past and present: the venerated, elevated and traditional collides with the urban, modern world destined to overturn them. Thus is the decadently 'high' past desecrated by the 'low' material reality of the present, while simultaneously banality and *byt* assume extra-material, poetic qualities. This dualistic process of transformation and iconoclasm is visible in the 'cloud in trousers', the hyperbolic equivalence of the lovelorn poet and Christ, and the idea of playing a nocturne on a water pipe:

> А вы
> ноктюрн сыграть
> могли бы
> на флейте водосточных труб?[61]
> [And could you play a nocturne on the flute of drain pipes?]

In another poem of the same year (1913) the poet writes:

> А я –
> в читальне улиц –
> так часто перелистывал гроба том.
> Полночь
> промокшими пальцами щупала
> меня [62]
> [And I –
> in the reading room of the streets –
> so often leafed through the tome of a coffin.
> Midnight
> with soaking fingers groped
> me]

Nothing here suggests that Maiakovskii intends this juxtaposition of disparate, old and new images to evoke a state of temporal stasis. However, his defamiliarizing

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[60] This is not to deny that Khlebnikov in general and his prose in particular exerted an influence on younger prose writers. As late as 1930 Iurii Olesha considered that 'учиться прозе следует нынче у академика Павлова и Велимира Хлебникова <...> Проза Хлебникова <...> – это школа для прозаиков.' [Today one should study prose under Academic Pavlov and Velimir Khlebnikov <...> Khlebnikov's prose <...> is a school for prosaists.] See Evgenii Arenzon, 'Proza – poeziia' in Velimir Khlebnikov, *Proza poeta* (Moscow: Vagrius, 2001), pp. 5-9 (p. 5).

[61] Vladimir Maiakovskii, *Sobranie sochinenii v vos'mi tomakh*, ed. by L.V. Maiakovskaia, V.V. Vorontsova and A. I. Koloskova (Moscow: Pravda, 1968), I, 18.

[62] Ibid., I, 34.

synthesis of those elements imparts a sense of surprise which might be described as revelatory, particularly in the resonance of Maiakovskii's sacred imagery with contemporary aspirations to found a new religion. Traces of the Symbolists' great poetic ambition to fuse spirit and matter, Apollo and Dionysus, East and West, can thus be identified in Maiakovskii's aesthetic. However, whereas Symbolist poetry tends to allude to transcendence within its mythological system (by describing or 'naming' it), Maiakovskii more directly 'enacts' transformation through the visceral effect of juxtapositional shocks.

Idea and Effect

This shift in approach reflects an ideological difference. While retaining the Symbolist attachment to aesthetically-mediated transcendence, Maiakovskii's worldview is aggressively materialistic. Therefore, he is naturally suspicious of the myth of Sophia, which draws an axis between subjective spiritual experience and the divinely ordained revelation. While Futurism has its own myths and fantasies (one recalls *Victory over the Sun*) it can be at its most persuasive when, consistent with its pro-modern, anti-traditionalist stance, it channels its transformative aspirations into profane, palpable reality. The drain pipe can hardly be credibly integrated into a transcendental system on a thematic level, but it can undergo a 'transfiguring' aestheticization within the structure of metaphor.

One can imagine how these juxtapositions in Maiakovskii's poetry might have appealed to writers after the Revolution. The approach potentially satisfies the need to accommodate the mythically-derived sense of the Revolution as transcendental and apocalyptic together with its inherent materialist antagonism toward the spiritualism of Old Russia. It contrives to combine revelation and demystification. More specifically, Maiakovskii's 'prosaic' treatment of poetry's sacred images is eminently applicable to prose, the medium better suited to dealing with concrete, earthly reality. After the Revolution the pendulum of literary fashion carried away the predominant status poetry had enjoyed during the Silver Age, reflecting to some extent a rejection of the 'airy-fairy' associations it had acquired. Yet the legacy of Symbolism and Futurism is sustained in the post-Revolutionary blossoming of poetic prose. Maiakovskii's contrasts of high and low are replicated in ornamentalist prose, arguably above all in Babel''s metaphors and juxtapositions.

The rise of Formalist theory in the 1920s is another factor likely to have influenced some writers to pay proportionately greater attention to stylistic effect. Indeed, Joseph Frank wrote in 1991 that long after publishing 'Spatial Form in Modern Literature' he became acquainted with Russian Formalism and aware of observations parallel to his own. In particular, 'Tomashevskii had noted that texts could be organized in two ways: either "causal-temporal relationships exist between thematic elements"; or "the thematic elements are contemporaneous" and / or "there is some shift in theme without internal exposition of the causal connections."'[63] This increased critical awareness of the effects of various structural systems is likely to have permeated the consciousness of contemporary writers as well.

Meanwhile, Formalist criticism is another symptom of a shift in attitudes to literature, its aspiration to approach texts scientifically (not as prophecies and incantations) representing a growing spirit of empiricism. This also has implications for the way in which the writer's role in relation to messianic discourse would be perceived. It is hard, for instance, to conceive of the Formalists accepting (as Askol'dov had) the harmonic unity of Belyi's *Second Symphony* on the basis of an intuition of a noumenal realm unifying the chaos. On the other hand, Belyi's stylistic-structural innovations and their effects would have interested them a great deal.[64]

Having said this, there is of course a danger of exaggerating the distinctions between generations and between movements. It is worth recalling that the above-considered texts by Remizov and even Belyi and Blok have their share of irony and ambivalence with regard to the apocalyptic paradigm. With regard to the overarching paradigm of 'Frank versus Kermode' in post-Revolutionary prose, the evidence of this chapter suggests that there is a latent impulse to expose paradoxes (if not to entirely deconstruct myths) in the complex texts of the first generation of Russian modernists.

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[63] Joseph Frank, *The Idea of Spatial Form* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1991), p. 120.

[64] Indeed, Viktor Shklovskii remarked that while Belyi's anthroposophical intentions were forgotten, his multilevel symbolism transformed Russian prose. Cited in Carden, 'Ornamentalism', p. 57.

After the End

Another factor which might influence writers toward formal effects and away from 'telling' the apocalypse myth is the narratological problem of the End. Before and up to the Revolution, this apocalypticism with a political aspect was orientated toward a climax in the future. Blok's depiction of Revolution in *The Twelve* is punctuated with motion (albeit conveyed in snapshot leitmotifs that do not necessarily provide a linear structure):

> ...И идут без имени святого
> Все двенадцать – вдаль.[65]
> [...And without the holy name go
> All twelve into the distance.]

This culminates in the revelation of Christ ahead. Belyi's *Christ is Risen* is another narrative of becoming, a synthesis of time and timelessness, also leading up to a climactic moment of apocalyptic breakthrough, Christ's resurrection.[66] However, as time passes after the Revolution, the need arises to contemplate what comes next. Both Blok's and Belyi's versions of the myth fail to give the climax clear form or, since it comes at the end of the work, to hint at what follows. At least by the 1920s the End, which has for centuries haunted the Russian imagination of the future, had to be dealt with as something situated in the present or past. This new, post-apocalyptic stage of Russian eschatological discourse presents new challenges for writers.

Evgenii Zamiatin's essay 'Paradise' points out the pernicious restrictions on artistic (and ethical) thought which are inherent in the very idea of eschatological closure. The condition of living in a paradise threatens to be oppressive by reducing the imagination to glorious hymn-singing. Zamiatin illustrates this point with contemporary verse from the proletarian culture movement:

> О, Москва! Слава, слава, слава!
> [O, Moscow! Glory, glory, glory!]
>
> Оркестры, громче ураганьте!
> Гремите трубы громогласней!
> [Orchestras, hurricane louder!
> Let your trumpets resound with louder voices!]

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[65] Blok, *Sochineniia*, p. 543.
[66] Andrei Belyi, 'Khristos voskres', in his *Stikhotvoreniia* (Berlin, Petrograd, Moscow, 1923), pp. 348-71.

Ныне восславим Молот
И Совнарком Мировой.[67]
[Now we will praise the Hammer
And the worldwide Council of People's Commissars.]

Like the emphatic, final cadences of a Romantic symphony that has overcome its anxieties and musical problems to achieve total resolution, these examples reveal the limitations of the 'resounding end' as the basis for new art. The fact that this sort of response is poetically much poorer than that of Blok is therefore not entirely due to the authors' deficiencies. As Zamiatin understands, monophonic odes probably carry the branch of the Symbolist myth attached to the Revolution to its most logical conclusion. Perhaps, indeed, Blok's late, anguished silence (after the mid-apocalyptic *The Twelve* and *Skify* [*The Scythians*]) reflects a similar awareness that the fulfilment of eschatological presentiments (resounding through his life's work) had led to an evaporation of poetic resources.

The verses Zamiatin quotes are among the more absolute and literal responses to Revolutionary apocalypticism. Other tactics for dealing with the post-apocalyptic condition involve greater heterogeneity, and therefore engender the possibility of greater ambivalence. Zamiatin praises Pil'niak as the most important among a few writers who transgress the laws of paradise. A descendent of Adam who has illegally stolen into heaven, Pil'niak is commended essentially for his attachment to reality, despite its ambiguities and imperfections.[68] As we have suggested, *Whirlwind Russia* is also open-ended, both in its portrayal of the mystically-charged new world and in its structure. Pil'niak and Remizov in polyphonic prose register more of the contradictions of their times than Blok and Belyi do in verse. In addition to generic differences, this might be related to their relative temporal distance from mid-Revolutionary euphoria (and perhaps particularly relevant to the later evolution of *Whirlwind Russia*). Similarly, Babel', Platonov and Zoshchenko develop idiosyncratic narrative strategies to deal with the problematic, lingering End-condition, as the following three chapters will seek to demonstrate.

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[67] Evgenii Zamiatin, 'Rai', in his *Ia boius': Literaturnaia kritika, publitsistika, vospominaniia* (Moscow: Nasledie, 1999), pp. 53-59 (p. 54). The respective authors are Obradovich, Smirenskie, and Kirillov.
[68] Ibid., pp. 58-59.

Of course, a further possible response to the difficulty of incorporating an eschatological conception of time with the point of End would be to discard the model altogether. However, while the three chosen writers exhibit doubts about it, the fact that they choose to engage with apocalyptic discourse suggests that it must have been sufficiently engrained in the cultural consciousness to seem relevant to the day. Indeed, during the 1920s literary apocalypticism retained its vitality. Established pre-Revolutionary writers retained a presence. Khlebnikov's *Ladomir* appeared in 1920 and Maiakovskii's 'Our Sunday' in 1922. Belyi's revision of *Petersburg* was published in 1922 in Berlin (and again in Russia in 1927). Aleksei Kruchenykh's critical work 'Apokalipsis v russkoi literature' ['The Apocalypse in Russian Literature'], opening with the epigraphic announcement that 'Тема Апокалипсиса и Конца Мира не забыта и в наши дни' [The subject of the Apocalypse and the End of the World is not forgotten even in our times], dates from 1923.[69] Parts of Remizov's chronicle came out throughout the 1920s until the publication of the whole in 1927. Beside the modernist apocalyptic legacy was the god-building project, which enjoyed semi-official support and involved figures as influential as Gor'kii and Lunacharskii. On this background younger writers continued to interact with messianically-derived ideas, from the utopian exultation of post-Symbolist *Proletkul't* to more sceptical and sophisticated writers such as Pil'niak. Even during the 1930s, when the state's increasing interference severely constrained literature with explicitly religious themes, its parallel self-mythologization sustained the eschatological context in a modified form. Thus it was as topical as ever when Zoshchenko created *Before Sunrise* – after twenty years of post-apocalyptic time.

[69] Aleksei Kruchenykh, 'Apokalipsis v russkoi literature', in his *Kukish proshliakam* (Moscow, Tallinn: Gileia, 1992), pp. 80-133 (p. 83).

Chapter Three – Crisis of time in Babel''s *Red Cavalry*

> После народа еврейского, русскому народу наиболее свойственна мессианская идея, она проходит через всю русскую историю вплоть до коммунизма.[1]
> [The messianic idea is most characteristic of the Russians of all peoples, after the Jewish people. It passes through the whole of Russian history right up to communism.]

> Как непригоден я для дела разрушения, как трудно отрываться мне от старины... от того, что было может быть худо, но дышало для меня поэзией, как улей медом, я отхожу теперь, ну что же – они будут делать революцию, а я буду, я буду петь то, что находится сбоку, то, что находится поглубже, я почувствовал, что смогу это сделать, и место будет для этого и время.[2]
> [How unfit I am for the business of destruction, how difficult it is for me to break away from the old times, from that which was perhaps bad, but smelt to me of poetry as the hive smells of honey. Now I get out of the way, what of it? They will make the Revolution, and I... I will sing that which is off to the side, that which runs deeper. I have felt I can do that, and there will be a place for it and a time.]

Isaak Babel''s cycle *Red Cavalry*, which draws on the author's personal experience of the Polish front in the summer of 1920, consists of stories published individually between 1920 and 1925.[3] Its genesis thus belongs to a period during which many writers were still articulating immediate, eschatologically-tinted responses to the Revolution, stressing its primal chaos, the euphoria of salvation or the leap made into a new epoch. The cultural backdrop to *Red Cavalry* includes many of the conceptions of the Revolution as an apocalyptic event or the foundation of a new religion discussed in the previous chapters: Maiakovskii's 'Our Sunday', the god-building project, and the fantastical utopianism of *Proletkul't*. Babel''s stories also appeared in the wake of Pil'niak's *The Naked Year* (1922) and sections of Remizov's *Whirlwind Russia*, examples of a thriving modernist prose suited to conveying the cataclysmic drama and newness of the hour. Babel''s contribution to the Revolutionary canon is related to both the messianic climate – as a 'mid-apocalyptic' narrative set in the Polish campaign – and the stylistic experimentation of the early and mid-1920s. However, *Red Cavalry* is a particularly complex and

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[1] Nikolai Berdiaev, 'Russkaia ideia', in his *Samopoznanie*, ed. by M.A. Bliumenkrants (Moscow: Eksmo-Press, 2001), pp. 11-247 (p. 19).
[2] Babel', unsent letter found in August 13th 1920 entry of his Polish diary. L. Livshits, 'Materialy k tvorcheskoi biografii I. Babelia', *Voprosy Literatury*, 4 (1964), 110-35 (p. 123).
[3] The majority of the *Red Cavalry* stories were published in 1923-24. The cycle was first published as a whole in 1926.

ambiguous treatment of Revolutionary eschatology. Babel''s distinctive perspective might reflect the interval between personal experience and composition of the stories, but is more tangibly rooted in his remarkable synthesis of a variety of cultural influences.

Pluralities of Babel''s Vision

Emerging as a writer as Viktor Shklovskii theorized on the poetics of estrangement, Babel' had the advantage of approaching Russian literature from the outside. He had a Jewish upbringing in Odessa, which in an early quasi-manifesto (itself entitled 'Odessa') is characterized by its un-Russian sunshine and cosmopolitan population, including the 'негры, англичане, французы и американцы' [Negroes, English, French and Americans], around a port visited by ships from Cardiff, Newcastle, Marseilles and Port Said, as well as its high proportion of Jews.[4] Babel' was accordingly orientated not only toward the Russian imperial centre, but also affected by the Jewish tradition in which he was raised, and by the literatures of Europe, which he absorbed as a youth.

The question of Babel''s approach to Russian messianic-eschatological discourse is thus coloured by the possibility that in slightly different circumstances he might have written in Yiddish or French. This tension is already evident in the aforementioned 1916 'manifesto', where the author prophesies a 'Литературный Мессия' [Literary Messiah] from Odessa, which is perhaps the only town in Russia 'где может родиться так нужный нам, наш национальный Мопассан' [where our national Maupassant, so necessary to us, can be born].[5] 'Our nation' is Russian, but its saviour is to materialize in its most Jewish city and emulate a French writer.

In fact, while Russia's destiny looms substantially in Babel''s writing, particularly in the *Red Cavalry* cycle set in the Revolution (Russia's apocalypse), he most often locates choices and conflicts within his principal narrator: the educated, assimilated Jewish individual, whose perceptions are informed by his Jewish and artistic identity. This supra-Russian quality is potentially subversive towards the national messianic discourse latent in the Russian language and readership he has chosen.

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[4] Isaak Babel', 'Odessa', in his *Konarmiia, rasskazy, p'esy* (St. Petersburg: Kristall, 1998), pp. 270-74 (p. 272).
[5] Ibid., pp. 271, 274.

For Babel''s contemporary Russian reader, the author's apocalyptic symbolism in a Revolutionary context is answered by a cluster of associations little concerned with Volynian Jews. The sense of estrangement from the mainstream of Russian apocalypticism is reflected by the remoteness of Moscow (the Third Rome of Russian messianism) from the Cossack, Jewish and Polish protagonists of *Red Cavalry*, as from the Odessa into which the Literary Messiah is to be born.

Scholarship of Babel' has been so fruitful, from Babel''s Russian contemporaries and Lionel Trilling in the West onward, that it is easy to regard its monument as a crushing weight rather than a viewing platform. Scholars have illuminated Babel' the Modernist, recognizing his particularly strong attachment to French culture, his evident interest in Nietzschean solutions to modern problems, and the manner in which issues relating to his identity as a non-believing Jew can represent a more general sense of alienation in his time, as familiar from the writings of Franz Kafka and Walter Benjamin.[6] Many, and above all Efraim Sicher, have charted the relationship of Babel''s Jewishness to his world as a whole, evinced in the situations facing the Jewish protagonists and narrator, and in his borrowing from Jewish tradition and symbolism. All substantial studies of Babel' have to some extent explored the heterogeneity of his vision. Many have connected this with the rich experiences of his youth: of cosmopolitan Odessa, centre of the secular Jewish Enlightenment, and of the multiple identity of a Francophile whose parents had spoken among themselves in Yiddish but to the children in Russian. In addition to these are the Russian and universally modern cultural influences Babel' would have shared with contemporary Moscow and Petersburg writers.

This multiplicity is reflected in Babel''s style as well as in his treatment of thematic material. Disparate mythical and cultural references are replicated in form to produce a distinctly polyphonic, modernist voice. Babel''s polished storytelling manner is subtler in its employment of discontinuities and fragmentation of perspective than works such as Belyi's symphonies and Pil'niak's *The Naked Year*.

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[6] Falen speculates that Babel' may have absorbed Nietzsche in France, where he enjoyed particular popularity. James Falen, *Isaac Babel': Russian Master of the Short Story* (Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1974), p. 171, footnote 13. Carden writes that 'Babel' broke through the language barrier by writing in Russian and through the psychological barrier by relating the Jewish problem of identity to more universal concerns.' Patricia Carden, *The Art of Isaac Babel* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972), p. 103.

However, his smoothness of style serves to amplify often outrageous juxtapositions and leaps, and the *Red Cavalry* stories deservedly established their author at the forefront of Soviet modernism. Babel''s non-linear structures are thus suitable for examination through the prism of Frank's and Kermode's differing conceptions of the 'timelessness' of modern literature. We can apply our questions concerning the extent to which his juxtapositions fuse new unities or underline irreconcilability, and seek to determine whether the effect, in the context of a crisis in time, is more 'transformative' or 'descriptive'. This will help locate *Red Cavalry* between the paradigms devolved from Frank's and Kermode's theories.

In evaluating Babel''s style, one should be sensitive to the mark of his specific influences, as well as their plurality. An aphoristic, 'Jewish' speech resounds in Babel''s authorial voice, in addition to those of his Jewish protagonists. Sicher has pointed out a correspondence between Babel''s complex textures and Jewish midrashic texts, which jump between genres and generations, and which the author would have known well through his Talmud studies.[7] There is also much in Babel''s writing to suggest the influence of aspects of Russian modernism. On the other hand, (Jewish-) Odessa's comparative secularism reduced the mediating role of Symbolism in Babel''s exposure to West-European culture and modernism. As Sicher remarks, Babel' was 'a non-believing Jew' who 'did not share the Symbolists' attraction to mysticism.'[8]

An active participant in the Russian Revolution and Russian modernism, Babel' approaches both with a degree of detachment. This makes *Red Cavalry* a highly suitable starting point for an investigation into the shifts in apocalyptic conceptions of history and art.

The Revolution as Apocalypse

> [Babel''s] use of biblical sources is, to say the least, unorthodox, and as a non-believing Jew he was not particularly concerned with the literal message of the Gospels. He did not share the Symbolists' attraction to mysticism. Nor was he

[7] See in Efraim Sicher, 'The Jewishness of Babel'', in *Jews in Soviet Culture*, ed. by Jack Miller (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1984), pp. 167-82, reworked and extended under the same title in Efraim Sicher, *Jews in Russian Literature after the October Revolution: Writers and Artists between Hope and Apostasy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press , 1995), pp. 71-111.
[8] Efraim Sicher, 'Midrash and History: A Key to the Babelesque Imagination', in *Isaac Babel*, ed. by Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 1987), pp. 215-30 (p. 227).

> seriously interested in allegorical interpretations of the role of the Christian saviour, such as in Blok's *The Twelve*, although the background of Marxist and religious messianism in pre-Revolutionary and Revolutionary Russia is relevant here.[9]

Babel' has his principal narrator and fictionalized self, Liutov, loudly reject and mock the anachronisms of Christianity and Judaism, along with their 'отставной бог' [retired god].[10] Yet his sense that the Revolution has rendered them outdated exists alongside a 'religious' quest for meaning and an ambivalent attitude toward the old and new. Despite its overt atheism, *Red Cavalry* engages with apocalyptic understandings of the Revolution with a frequency which suggests that the author found it a meaningful context. This aspect of the cycle has hitherto been neglected by scholars (apart from the occasional remark, not subsequently developed), probably because Babel' deals with Russian eschatological discourse obliquely and never exactly on its own terms. As a result of this scholarly lacuna, this chapter will begin by setting out the thematic aspects of *Red Cavalry* that justify such a view.

The relative inconspicuousness of the apocalyptic-messianic context is partly due to the fact that its manifestations tend to be articulated by or projected onto individual protagonists of limited insight, rather than an authoritative, all-knowing narrator. A second factor is that the cataclysmic event of the Revolution brings a variety of such protagonists into conjunction, and thus serves as the focal point for a polyphony of messianic responses to history, rather than a unified and coherent view.

Jewish characters represent some of the more prominent instances of messianism in *Red Cavalry*. Jewish tradition, as Berdiaev suggests, is even more profoundly messianic than Russian tradition, and the persecutions suffered by the Diaspora while awaiting the Messiah intensify scripturally-rooted expectation. The deprivations caused by anti-Semitism and the dreams of salvation run through all of Babel''s story groups. The 'autobiographical' 'Istoriia moei golubiatni' ['The Story of My Dovecot'] depicts a pogrom, while Benia Krik of the Odessa stories, who manages to escape the role of victim, expresses the existential lot comically:

> Но разве со стороны бога не было ошибкой поселить евреев в России, чтобы они мучались, как в аду? И чем было бы плохо, если бы евреи жили в

[9] Ibid., p. 227.
[10] Isaak Babel', *Detstvo i drugie rasskazy*, ed. by V. Levin, S. Markish and E. Sicher (Jerusalem: Biblioteka-Aliia, 1979), p. 127.

> Швейцарии, где их окружали бы первоклассные озера, гористый воздух и сплошные французы?[11]
> [But wasn't it a mistake on God's part to settle Jews in Russia, for them to suffer as in hell? And what would be so wrong if the Jews lived in Switzerland, where they'd be surrounded by first-class lakes, mountain air and nothing but Frenchmen?]

In such a context, the internationalist Revolution could be as attractive to Jewish messianism as to the Russian, Orthodox-derived tradition, both of which were universalist in their aspirations. Peter Duncan describes the intermingling of the two in Russian revolutionism: 'While the influence of Jewish messianism may have had a role in attracting Jews to Marxism, there is little doubt that the influence of *narodnichestvo* added a dimension of Russian messianism, and probably Jewish messianism, too, to Russian Marxism.'[12] Thus Rozanov's and others' conceptions of the Revolution as a new religion, and especially Ivanov-Razumnik's equation of Old Russia with the Old Testament and Russia-in-the-making with the New Testament, would have had a particular resonance for Jews.[13] In *Red Cavalry* Babel''s Jewish characters and narrator repeatedly examine the Revolution as a possible fulfilment of messianic expectation.

The story 'Doroga' ['The Journey'], which was written later than *Red Cavalry* but shares its Civil War setting, contains one of the most disturbing passages in Babel''s writing:

> Телеграфист прочитал их мандат, подписанный Луначарским, вытащил из-под дохи маузер с узким и грязным дулом и выстрелил учителю в лицо. <...> Начальник мигнул мужику, тот поставил на пол фонарь, расстегнул убитого, отрезал ему ножиком половые части и стал совать их в рот его жене.
> – Брезговала трефным, – сказал телеграфист, – кушай кошерное.
> У женщины вздулась мягкая шея. Она молчала. Поезд стоял в степи. Волнистые снега роились полярным блеском. Из вагонов на полотно выбрасывали евреев. Выстрелы звучали неровно, как возгласы.[14]
> [The telegraphist read their warrant, signed by Lunacharskii, pulled from under his coat a Mauser with a narrow and dirty muzzle, and shot the teacher in the face. <...> The boss winked to the peasant, who placed his lamp on the floor, unbuttoned the dead man, cut off his sexual organs with a knife, and began to stuff them into his wife's mouth.
> "You were squeamish of *tref*," said the telegraphist, "eat something kosher."

[11] Ibid., p. 252.
[12] See Peter J.S. Duncan, *Russian Messianism: Third Rome, Revolution, Communism and After* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 51-52 (p. 52).
[13] On Ivanov-Razumnik see Greta N. Slobin, *Remizov's fictions, 1900-1921* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1991), p. 129.
[14] Babel', *Detstvo*, p. 91.

> The woman's soft neck swelled. She was silent. The train was standing on the steppe. Waves of snow swarmed in the polar brilliance. They were throwing the Jews out of the train onto the tracks. Shots resounded unevenly, like exclamations.]

Later on the narrator, who has narrowly escaped the fate of the other Jews on the train, is asked '"Куда? Куда вас носит... Зачем она едет, ваша нация?.. Зачем мутит, турбуется..."' [Where? Where is it taking you... Why does it move about, your nation?... Why does it stir up trouble, foment unrest?][15] The narrator's journey – a possible model for 'his nation' – ends in assimilation, serving the universal cause of the Cheka. Here he finds a kind of comradeship that is only to be found 'in our country' [в нашей стране].[16]

Red Cavalry records crude notions that the Revolution is the work of the 'Jews' Lenin and Trotskii and depicts Jewish hopes for change: the Berestechko *shtetl* 'смердит в ожидании новой эры' [stinks in anticipation of a new era].[17] However, Babel' is fully aware of tensions in accepting the Revolution as the salvation of Jews. First, in doing so it threatens to obliterate the Jewish tradition. A second, related tension consists in the hostility of the Revolution to unassimilated Jews, manifested at the point of contact by the anti-Semitism of Cossacks in the Red Cavalry.

The devout Gedali, who was blinded by the Poles, speaks for the many Jews in the cycle who have also suffered at the hands of Bolshevism. He desires to embrace the Revolution but despairs of its destructive means:

> – Революция – скажем ей "да", но разве субботе мы скажем "нет"? <...> "Да", кричу я революции, "да", кричу я ей, но она прячется от Гедали и высылает вперед только стрельбу... <...> Это замечательно, это революция! И потом тот, который бил поляка, говорит мне: "Отдай на учет твой граммофон, Гедали..." – "Я люблю музыку, пани", – отвечаю я революции. – "Ты не знаешь, что ты любишь, Гедали, я стрелять в тебя буду, тогда ты это узнаешь, и я не могу не стрелять, потому что я – революция..."[18]
> ["The Revolution, we'll say 'yes' to it, but must we say 'no' to the Sabbath? <...> 'Yes,' I cry to the Revolution, 'yes,' I cry to it, but it hides from Gedali and sends ahead only shooting <...> It's marvellous, this Revolution! And then the one who beat up the Pole says to me: 'Hand over your gramophone, Gedali...' – 'I like music, sir,' I answer the Revolution. 'You don't know what you like, Gedali. I'll shoot you, then you'll know, and I'm unable not to shoot, because I'm the Revolution.'"]

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[15] Ibid., p. 92.
[16] Ibid., p. 97.
[17] Ibid., p. 169.
[18] Ibid., p. 126.

Gedali's impossible wish for a revolution made by an 'International of Good People' [Интернационал добрых людей] emphasizes the gulf between two conceptions of the resolution of history.[19]

Another of the protagonists of *Red Cavalry* is the son of Rabbi Motale, named Il'ia: the Russian version of Elijah, the name of the prophet who according to Jewish lore will herald the messiah.[20] In contrast to Gedali, he eschews Jewish for Bolshevik messianism and abandons his family to enlist. Whereas for Gedali the mother's soul is eternal and her memory sacrosanct, Il'ia overcomes his conscience to choose the eternity of the historical struggle: '"Мать в революции – эпизод."' [A mother in a revolution is just an episode.][21] Il'ia's story arrests Liutov because his inner conflict resembles the narrator's own, and Il'ia succeeds in resolving his where the equivocating Liutov cannot. At first glance Il'ia impresses the narrator as having 'Spinoza's mighty brow' [с могущественным лбом Спинозы] in contrast to the decrepit Jews around him and the portrayal throughout *Red Cavalry* of Jewish communities as dying out, wretched and backward.[22] With his prophetic name and steely commitment to the new world, he is a typical Babel' fantasy of the virile Jew who by transcending the restrictions of his background is able to protect his people. It is less Il'ia's death, in the final story of the first version of the cycle, that serves to deflate this dream than the irreparable fragmentation expressed by the strewn possessions he leaves behind:

> Здесь все было свалено вместе – мандаты агитатора и памятники еврейского поэта. Портреты Ленина и Маймонида лежали рядом. <...> Прядь женских волос была заложена в книжку постановлений шестого съезда партии, и на полях коммунистических листовок теснились кривые строки древнееврейских стихов. Печальным и скупым дождем падали они на меня – страницы "Песни песней" и револьверные патроны.[23]
> [Here everything was thrown together: an agitator's warrants and the works of a Jewish poet. Portraits of Lenin and Maimonides lay side by side <...> A woman's lock of hair was placed in the booklet of the resolutions of the Sixth Party Congress, and in the margins of communist pamphlets jostled crooked lines of ancient Hebrew verse. In a sad and pitiful rain they fell upon me: pages of the Song of Songs and revolver cartridges.]

[19] Ibid., p. 127.
[20] Efraim Sicher, 'Babel''s "Shy Star": Reference, Inter-reference and Interference', *New Zealand Slavonic Journal* (2002) 259-75 (p. 267).
[21] Babel', *Detstvo*, pp. 133, 230.
[22] Ibid., pp. 134-35.
[23] Ibid., p. 229.

While Babel' explores the relationship between Revolutionary and Jewish messianisms most explicitly, it would be wrong to suggest that his interest in eschatological discourse were confined to the Jewish angle. The stories relating to the local Roman Catholic populations and their churches remind the reader that this historical period also witnessed a surge in Polish messianism (with Poland's ultimate victory in the war its highpoint). While this context is much more implicit, it is present in glimpses of the enemy and particularly of the transformative power of Catholic art.

By portraying the messianic feelings of the counterrevolution and ambivalent Jews caught in the middle of the war, Babel' extends the image of Revolution as Apocalypse beyond its Russo-centric origins. As we have seen, Babel''s alter ego Liutov speaks from the borderland of Russian experience; 'his' stories are located on the edges of Russia, and *Red Cavalry* portrays the frontier where the Russian Revolution touches on non-Russian populations of the Tsarist empire. Perhaps as a consequence of the complexity of inhabiting overlapping cultures and their overlapping messianic myths, Babel' tends to root apocalyptic ideas in the perceiver, rather than associate them with universal ramifications. Thus, when dealing with the Bolshevik side with which he has aligned himself, the context is used to convey individual participants' quasi-religious experience of the critical moment of history, and not to relate stories to the historical perspective through a prism of Russian or Marxist messianic meta-narratives. Apocalyptic passages tend not to relate to significant events in the wider story of the Revolution. The Cossack Matvei Pavlichenko narrates his revenge with comparisons to the Last Judgement [вечный суд and последний суд].[24] Similarly, Prishchepa ends his vengeful spree and drinking bout by rising on the *third* night and lighting a fire which 'shone like a resurrection' [Пожар сиял, как воскресенье].[25] The depressed and crazed Sidorov, fantasizing about leading a revolution in Italy, sits beside a window, which 'заполненное лунным огнем, сияло как избавление' [filled with moonlight, shone like a deliverance].[26]

[24] Ibid., pp. 152, 155.
[25] Ibid., pp. 159-60.
[26] Ibid., p.124.

Relationship to Russian Literary Apocalyptic Myths

Such depictions of Bolshevik warriors are original in the way that they endow subjective experience with messianic qualities. On the other hand, we can identify a relationship between Babel''s Cossacks and the cultural stereotype of the simple foot soldier of the Apocalypse who is unaware of his significance, most famously exemplified by Blok's twelve Red Guards-apostles. Indeed, *Red Cavalry*'s motif of settling accounts echoes that depicted in *The Twelve*. Stories such as Matvei Pavlichenko's remind us of Blok's attitude to the people's inevitable need for retribution in 'The Intelligentsia and the Revolution': 'Почему гадят в любезных сердцу барских усадьбах? – Потому, что там насиловали и пороли девок: не у того барина, так у соседа.' [Why do they defile the beloved country estates of the gentry? – Because lasses were coerced and flogged there: if not at that estate, then at the neighbouring one.][27]

The apocalyptic myth of justice and annihilation is eminently applicable to the condition of Babel'-Liutov, with his high aspirations for the Revolution, combined with the ambivalent feelings generated by its threat to sweep away his Jewish world and by the latent aggression of this *Russian* Revolution toward him personally as a Jew. As such, the narrator enlists apocalyptic imagery in depicting his own experiences in the Red Cavalry, just as he does in portraying those of other protagonists.

One of the most familiar images in The Revelation of St. John the Divine is the apocalyptic rider: the 'army of horsemen' numbering 'two hundred thousand thousand' of Revelation 9. 16, and most famously the four horsemen of Revelation 6. 2-8. As David Bethea notes, it is also the image with the most resonance in Russian self-projections of the myth (thanks to its indigenous images of volatile bogatyrs and marauding Mongols on horseback).[28] By Babel''s time, the interbreeding of biblical and Russian images had created a constellation of more and less direct associations, from Pushkin's *Mednyi vsadnik* [*The Bronze Horseman*], which gallops into Belyi's *Petersburg* a century later, and Gogol''s

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[27] Aleksandr Blok and Andrei Belyi, *Dialog poetov o Rossii i revoliutsii*, ed. by M.F. P'ianykh (Moscow: Vysshaia shkola, 1990), p. 421.
[28] David Bethea, *The Shape of Apocalypse in Modern Russian Fiction* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), pp. 44-53.

description of Russia as a troika to the aforementioned Symbolist and post-Symbolist discourse envisaging ancient Eastern tribes symbolically overrunning the West on horseback once again. A novel written contemporaneously with *Red Cavalry*, Boris Savinkov's *Kon' voronoi* [*The Black Horse*] similarly draws on personal experience of the Civil War, though from the opposing side. (Babel' and Savinkov, who published under the pseudonym Ropshin, were in Poland at the same time in the summer of 1920; indeed, the story 'Vdova' ['The Widow'] alludes to a battle against the Savinkov Cossacks: 'шел бой с савинковскими казаками'.)[29] The novel's title derives from Revelation 6. 5 – a fact confirmed by the use of the verse as an epigraph. Although *The Black Horse* was not published until after the majority of *Red Cavalry* stories had been at least drafted, Babel' would certainly have been aware of Savinkov's earlier novel *The Pale Horse* (title and epigraph from Revelation 6. 8), based on the author's struggles as an SR terrorist.[30]

In the context of such a prevalent discourse, Babel' would forgive readers for speculating whether the title of his cycle were a hint at an apocalyptic subtext to the stories. The chosen *конармия* ['horse-army'] is a signifier both loaded with broad apocalyptic suggestion – the army of horsemen, the four horsemen, the Scythians – and, because the word is a Soviet neologism, a concrete referent of the new era initiated by the October Revolution.[31]

Babel''s decision to depict the 'primitive' Cossacks among the Bolshevik combatants strengthens the correlation with the elemental, Scythian, eschatological associations of the horseman, and his portrayal of them reinforces it. The awe-struck narrator records the impressive physicality of the Cossack heroes in a way that appears superhuman, at least in comparison to his own cerebral identity. For instance, in 'Moi pervyi gus'' ['My First Goose']:

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[29] Babel', *Detstvo*, p. 207.

[30] Savinkov published *The Black Horse* in Paris in 1924. *The Pale Horse* was published in Nice, 1913. Zinaida Gippius's foreword to Savinkov's posthumously published poetry attests to the fame of the novel: 'Мы все помним этот роман.' V. Ropshin, *Kniga stikhov: Posmertnoe izdanie* (Paris, 1931), p. x. Babel''s fascination with dark characters' motivation suggests he might have found Savinkov, candid and intelligent, but not of typical, humanist literary sensibilities, a specimen of particular interest. Indeed, one may wonder whether his matter-of-fact depiction of murderous psychology in curt sentences (which, although Savinkov has stylistic shortcomings, are impressive in their sparse truthfulness) may have influenced Babel''s laconicism in violent episodes.

[31] Compare with the neutral terms for cavalry, *кавалерия* and *конница*. See Brown, Edward J., *Russian Literature Since the Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 89.

> Савицкий, начдив шесть, встал, завидев меня, и я удивился красоте гигантского его тела. Он встал и <…> разрезал избу пополам, как штандарт разрезает небо.[32] [Savitskii, Nachdiv 6, rose at the sight of me and I was astonished at the beauty of his gigantic body. He rose and <…> cut the cabin in two, as a standard cuts the sky.]

James Falen has the impression that 'these primitive men, who may be the creators of a new era, have something of that terror-inspiring quality shared by demons and gods'.[33] Similarly, Patricia Carden likens the Cossacks to 'angels of death', and suggests that the frequent pictorial detail of a cloak 'transforms them into sinister forces'.[34] Although we are ignorant of the physiognomy of the four riders in Revelation 6, the only universally familiar visual representation of the horsemen, from Albrecht Dürer's series of woodcuts (1498), does attach a cloak to the foregrounded fourth rider:

Albrecht Dürer, detail from *Die vier apokalyptischen Reiter* (1498, woodcut)

[32] Babel', *Detstvo*, p. 129.
[33] Falen, pp. 168-69.
[34] Carden, *Art*, p. 112.

D'iakov flourishes an operatic cloak at the beginning and end of 'Nachal'nik konzapasa' ['The Horse-Reserve Commander']; Pavlichenko wears one in 'Berestechko', and Korochaev in 'Smert' Dolgushova' ['The Death of Dolgushov']:

> В полдень пролетел мимо нас Корочаев в черной бурке – опальный начдив четыре, сражающийся в одиночку и ищущий смерти...
> И ускакал – развевающийся, весь черный, с угольными зрачками.[35]
> [At midday Korochaev flew past us in a black cloak – disgraced Nachdiv 4, fighting alone and searching for death...
> And he galloped away – fluttering, entirely black, with pupils of coal.]

In addition to the black cloak and demonic 'pupils like coals', the close repetition of 'пролетел' [flew] and 'развевающийся' [fluttering] amplifies Korochaev's supernatural dynamism. His 'search for death' echoes the destructive task of the apocalyptic horsemen, although it is inverted, as the eschatological agent is transformed into a victim, and therefore a human.

A thorough examination of *Red Cavalry* reveals further tantalizing and ambivalent suggestions of apocalyptic horsemen. Among the army of horses appearing in the cycle, only four are directly designated by an adjective of colour. The famous four horses in Revelation 6. 2-8 are respectively white [белый], red [рыжий], black [вороной], and pale [бледный] in most English and Russian translations.[36] Falen has already suggested that the white and black horses over which Savitskii and Khlebnikov quarrel in 'Istoriia odnoi loshadi' ['The Story of One Horse'] may relate to the first and third horses of the Apocalypse:

> He who sits upon the white horse, says the Book of Revelation, shall wear a crown and be a conqueror, while the rider of the black horse holds in his hand a pair of balances, symbolizing right and justice. Khlebnikov, the reasonable man who seeks a just and rational solution, 'a regular Karl Marx,' as he is called, in time becomes reconciled to his loss (he leaves the army to become chairman of a local Revolutionary Committee); while Savitskii, no longer astride the white stallion, rides toward chaos and death, toward an apocalypse which he himself can mock.[37]

Babel' uses the adjectives 'белый' and 'вороной', as in the Russian Bible.

There is a red [рыжий] horse ('чистый большевичок' [a pure Bolshevik]) in the following story, 'Konkin'.[38] The brief of the second rider of the Apocalypse is to take peace from the world, that people might turn upon and kill each other. Such a

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[35] Babel', *Detstvo*, p. 141.
[36] This includes the King James Bible and canonical Russian Bible.
[37] Falen, p. 192 [footnote].
[38] Babel', *Detstvo*, p. 165.

scene is acted out in this rare face-to-face encounter between representatives of the two warring sides: the unseated and cornered White general and Red *skaz* narrator. The story is more than the allegory it could be, of the substitution of the reactionary rider of the horse of destiny (white on red), because the horse, which the narrator wanted to save for Lenin, does not survive the combat. And whereas the second Johannine rider is given a great sword, the general hands over a broken sabre to his capturer.

The pale, fourth horse of Revelation (6. 8) is the most well-known, because the passage is the most macabre ('and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell [or Hades] followed him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth') and perhaps also due to the unspecific epithet 'pale', which demands more of the imagination. There is no 'конь бледный' in *Red Cavalry*, but there is a credible candidate for his rider. Afon'ka Bida is the most developed of the archetypal, physical Cossack characters, appearing in four stories, in each of which there is an 'apocalyptic' combination of wild disorder (in his behaviour and in his various performances) and associations with Christian myth and art. In 'The Death of Dolgushov' he emerges with the halo of the sunset behind him. In 'U sviatogo Valenta' ['At Saint Valentine's'] he plays the church organ drunk and chaotically. In 'Put' v Brody' ['The Way to Brody'] he recounts a crucifixion wherein the bees refuse to sting Christ, a carpenter by trade, due to proletarian class solidarity. At an ironic distance, these examples cast Bida in the role of the participant in a Revolutionary Revelation, where Christ returns to lead Red Guards.

In 'The Way to Brody' he sings about a 'соловый жеребчик' [light bay stallion].[39] The original Greek adjective for the fourth horse of the Apocalypse is 'χλωρος', which, though usually rendered as 'pale / бледный', in fact literally means 'green' or 'yellowish pale'. It would be uncontroversial to state that the second of these meanings is the more naturalistic option in the equine context. D.H. Lawrence translates it as 'yellowish', which is the literal meaning of Babel''s word

[39] Ibid., p. 137.

'соловый'.[40] It would seem impossible to prove whether Babel''s study of the Bible acquainted him with the exact meaning of 'χλωρος', but it seems likely that this coincidence is intentional, given that the other three horses of the paradigm are in place, the frequency of biblical references in general in the work, and the author's scrupulous attention to detail. Babel''s refined stylistic sense perhaps forewarned him against overplaying the association in the most obvious case. Furthermore, his predilection for the concrete would similarly incline him toward the selection of a precise colour. Even if he were not familiar with the Greek, 'light bay' is nonetheless pale, and a logical particularization of the vaguer translations, consistent with Babel''s principle of precision.[41]

Just as in the previous example, the apocalyptic plot is subjected to travesty and the biblical dynamic is inverted. Whereas the fourth horseman descends to earth from the cosmic, eternal realm in order to unleash death, the pale stallion in Afon'ka's song bears his drunken, beheaded master to heaven. In another story Afon'ka Bida himself plays the part of the fourth horseman, setting out on a violent spree, about which our only information is supplied by the aftermath of his actions:

> И только грозный ропот на деревнях, злой и хищный след Афонькиного разбоя указывал нам трудный его путь.[42]
> [And only the menacing murmur in the villages, the vicious and predatory trace of Afon'ka's piracy indicated to us his difficult path.]

However, Afon'ka's motivation is his own salvation by means of procuring a new horse. The loss of his first horse is discussed in the language of an existential crisis:

> – Конь – он отец, – вздохнул Биценко, – бесчисленно раз жизню [sic] спасает. Пропасть Биде без коня...[43]
> ["A horse, it is a father," sighed Bitsenko, "who saves you countless times. Without his horse Bida's for the abyss..."]

Stepan, the horse whom Afon'ka Bida rampages to replace, is described as having white muscles, which, in a scene taking place after the stars have come out, must be visualized as a pale, rather than a brilliant shade.[44] If Stepan is understood as a

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[40] D.H. Lawrence, *Apocalypse and The Writings on Revelation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 102. 'Соловый' is defined as 'желтоватый' [yellowish] in S.I. Ozhegov and N.Iu. Shvedova, *Tolkovyi slovar' russkogo iazyka* (Moscow: Rossiiskaia akademiia nauk, 1998), p. 746.
[41] 'Light bay' is an equestrian term for a pale yellowish-brown colouring.
[42] Babel', *Detstvo*, p. 181.
[43] Ibid., p. 181.
[44] Ibid., p. 180.

variant on the pale horse, he completes a pathetic quartet of apocalyptic horses and riders modified into fallible creatures, vulnerable to death and defeat, indubitably within and smaller than history. Each rider has idiosyncratic but passionate aspirations amid this apocalypse, and none of them – neither Khlebnikov, the White general, Savitskii, nor Bida – concludes the cycle with the horse upon which they began.[45]

Babel's-Liutov's idiosyncratic treatment of the Red Cavalrymen, setting them up as avenging, apocalyptic angels and simultaneously demystifying them, reflects his contradictory feelings toward his identity and related ambivalence toward the Revolution, and particularly the Cossacks as its instrument. The work's somewhat ironic attitude to its mythological subtext is also consistent with the reader's and author's retrospective knowledge (quietly acknowledged in the text) that at least in this localized battle for Poland the Apocalypse-Revolution is destined to flounder.

However, Babel''s portrayal of the Revolution within the terms of the eschatological tradition has another aspect. As we have seen, although the 'Scythian' aspect of apocalyptic discourse resonated with the waves of violence and chaos brought by the Civil War, it predated the Revolution and carried distinct connotations. The notion of the elemental East bringing down Europe's bourgeois corruption was primarily a paradigm of inner, religious transformation. As we have also seen, the Symbolist movement before the Revolution believed that art was the means to effect this 'apocalypse of perception', and figures such as Blok and Belyi greeted the Revolution as the materialization in life of the goals toward which they had long striven through poetry. The avant-garde shared the Symbolists' aspiration to reconstruct reality through art, as well as the later sense that this goal was in accord with those of the Revolution. However, its rejection of traditional religiosity and reinvestment of apocalyptic dynamics and imagery into the material world distinguish its approach from the Symbolists. One imagines that this rendered the avant-garde more accessible to the non-believing, irreverent Babel'. His portrayal of

[45] Due to the spatial restrictions of this project, it is regrettably impossible to do more than mention the context of the locomotive, which also has apocalyptic connotations in Russia, as the 'iron horse', harnessing the nation's energy. (See Bethea, pp. 47, 56-59.) In *Red Cavalry*, train carriages are settings for ambivalent revelation, sometimes more negative (e.g. the stories 'Sol'' ['Salt'] and 'Vecher' ['Evening']), and sometimes more positive in character (e.g. 'Rabbi' ['The Rabbi']). Il'ia's death in 'Syn Rabbi' ['The Rabbi's Son'] also occurs on the rails to the future.

the Cossacks illuminates his relationship to these aesthetic-apocalyptic trends – and specifically to their manifestation in the avant-garde. Examining this aspect will in turn suggest how Babel''s modernist prose structures can be apprehended in the context of the discourse of transformation.

Aesthetic Apocalypse: Futurist Horsemen and Glittering Skies

If the Cossacks lack credibility as angels of an apocalyptic force from outside history, perhaps they are more plausible as participants in that apocalyptic leap in aesthetic consciousness: the reconstructive vision of modernism. In a number of ways they resemble the Futurists who toured the provinces, attempting to shock audiences with their disregard for tradition and aesthetic norms. Both on and off the battlefield, these angels (or demons) are time and again cast as performers, who scorn bourgeois values (such as the narrator's inability to kill and his desire to avoid making enemies) and eschew civilized decorum (a young Cossack in 'My First Goose' greets the narrator with his posterior and 'emits shameful sounds' [стал издавать постыдные звуки]).[46] Their outlandish taste in clothes also distinctly recalls what we know of Futurists attempting to shock by dressing in bright colours, wearing radishes, and so on. For example, D'iakov is 'бывший цирковой атлет <...> – краснорожий, седоусый, в черном плаще и с серебряными лампасами вдоль красных шаровар' [a former circus athlete <...>, red-skinned, grey-moustached, in a black cloak and with silver stripes down his red oriental trousers].[47] Afon'ka Bida returns from his rampage in 'выкроенная из голубого ковра куртка с вышитой на спине лилией, и потный чуб его был расчесан поверх вытекшего глаза' [a coat cut from a light blue carpet with an embroidered lily on the back, and a sweaty forelock was combed over his missing eye].[48] Savitskii first appears 'пурпуром своих рейтуз, малиновой шапочкой, сбитой набок, орденами, вколоченными в грудь' [with the purple of his breeches, raspberry cap, worn askew, and medals stuck to his chest].[49]

Flamboyant 'Futurist' performance is also characteristic of the Cossacks' theatricality in action. Korochaev's melodramatic gallop has already been

[46] Babel', *Detstvo*, p. 130.
[47] Ibid., p. 111.
[48] Ibid., p. 183.
[49] Ibid., p. 129.

mentioned. D'iakov employs his circus skills to induce a dying horse to rise to its feet, subduing and horrifying the spectators who have claimed that the animal is unfit. Rather absurdly, it is by performing his ventriloquist act that Konkin breaks the will of the proud general with the red horse. In the second and third of these examples, not only does the struggle to establish the power of the new world have an aesthetic face, but the artistic act in itself effects change. (In fact, farting in a short story is also a kind of remoulding of reality.) There is also a modernist aesthetic in the various performances by the key figure of Afon'ka Bida. His organ-playing during the desecration of a church is chaotic and fragmented:

> Каждый звук был песня, и все звуки были оторваны друг от друга. Песня – ее густой напев – длилась мгновение и переходила в другую.[50]
> [Each sound was a song, and all the sounds were cut off from one another. A song – its dense tune – lasted a moment and proceeded into another].

Both this and his narratives about the bees at the crucifixion and the light bay stallion riding to heaven have a sacrilegiousness pervasive in Futurism. Even the less extravagant Cossack characters can be regarded as artists: Sashka is a singer and in both of his appearances Khlebnikov, like his Futurist namesake, is a writer.

The Cossacks' non-standard speech in *Red Cavalry*, defamiliarizing with its archaisms, idiolects and illiteracy, also echoes the Futurist aesthetic. Indeed, Kruchenykh welcomed Babel''s incorporation of provincial dialects and neologisms into his writing in the 1920s as an affirmation of the principles of *zaum'*.[51] Babel' particularly exploits the lack of sensitivity to language and textual structure in his secondary, *skaz* narrators. For example, in 'Pis'mo' ['The Letter'] Kurdiukov writes to his mother about relatively insignificant details of his war experiences and implores her to wash his horse's forelegs, before 'hastening to add' that his father, who joined the Whites, has killed his brother. This event is relayed in detail, omitting nothing where feelings might be spared. There follows a cheery description of the town of Voronezh. Kurdiukov subsequently recounts how he and his other brother caught up with the filicidal father, whose demise the narrator did not witness, although the reader's imagination is primed by the description of the

[50] Ibid., p. 186.
[51] Vahan D. Barooshian, *Russian Cubo-Futurism 1910-30: A study in Avant-Gardism* (The Hague / Paris: Monton, 1974), p. 90.

earlier killing. The story is framed by Liutov's voice, which emphasizes the defamiliarizing effect of Kurdiukov's desensitized language.

As Carden has commented, there are comparable, arresting figures of speech with 'a daring that is almost futurist' throughout Babel''s writing, especially noted in the speech of his Jewish characters.[52] As such, the Cossacks could be considered the most radical modernists in Babel''s wider 'aesthetic revolution': they are the avant-garde who realize modernism's military metaphor and live out the Futurist aesthetic of violence. They are relatives of the tough Futurist hero (himself descended from the Nietzschean *Übermensch*) and simultaneously embody the marauding Scythian of Russian eschatological myth: sweeping westward on horseback, spreading a revolution against the old world and bourgeois sensibilities by sword and novelty.[53]

Just as Babel''s Cossacks and secondary narrators bring together incongruent images as a result of their illiteracy, Liutov's sophisticated authorial voice displays similar 'Futurist' proclivities. Babel''s vivid and abundant depiction of astral bodies in *Red Cavalry* exemplifies this debt to Futurism, and at the same time reveals a common approach to the discourse of transformation.[54]

On a basic level, the prominence of heavenly bodies reinforces the apocalyptic subtext of the work. The following sentence appears in the story 'Afon'ka Bida': 'Над Лешнювом встало блещущее небо <...> как всегда в часы опасности' [A glittering sky arose above Leszniow <...> as always at times of danger].[55] This reminds the reader – especially the contemporary reader – of the widespread conception of the Revolution as an event of cosmic significance (even if one detects a distance between writer and narrator in the naïve sweep of the generalization). Some of Babel''s astral images appear to derive from the Johannine Apocalypse itself. The passages 'Ковыль шелестел на потревоженной земле, и в траву падали августовские звезды' [Feather grass rustled on the alarmed earth, and the August stars fell into the grass] and 'Первая звезда блеснула надо мной и упала в

[52] Carden, *Art*, p. 77.
[53] Regarding Nietzsche's influence on the Futurists, see Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, 'A New Word for a New Myth: Nietzsche and Russian Futurism', in *The European Foundations of Russian Modernism*, ed. by Peter Barta and Ulrich Goebel (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen, 1991), pp. 219-49, especially p. 233.
[54] Williams counts forty one references to the sun and twenty to the moon. Gareth Williams, 'Two Leitmotifs in Babel''s *Konarmija*', *Die Welt der Slaven*, 17.2 (1972), 308-17 (p. 309).
[55] Babel', *Detstvo*, p. 179.

тучи' [A first star shone above me and fell into the storm clouds] echo the four episodes of falling stars in Revelation (6. 8; 8. 10-11; 9. 1; and 12. 3).[56] It seems likely that a reference to the dragon of the apocalypse (Revelation 12. 3, onward) is intended in 'Perekhod cherez Zbruch' ['Crossing the Zbruch'] and 'Berestechko', where one finds the images 'лунные змеи' [the lunar serpents] and 'Над прудом взошла луна, зеленая, как ящерица' [Above the pond rose the moon, green as a lizard].[57] The moon makes another appearance, this time in 'Syn rabbi' ['The Rabbi's Son'], as a horned beast: 'Тонкий рог луны купал свои стрелы в черной воде Тетерева' [The thin horn of the moon bathed its arrows in the black water of the Teterev].[58]

This pattern of imagery reinforces the association with the eschatological discourse: it is natural that an apocalypse-in-progress should be surrounded by motifs from Revelation. Furthermore, the fact that they are presented as lyrical cataclysms in the vision of a solitary artist is consistent with both the Symbolist / Futurist re-emphasis upon transforming the world by transforming one's vision of it, and with Babel''s tendency to concentrate on the individual's experience of messianic ideas. In each of the above examples, the poetic imagination of the author-narrator projects mythical significance onto images in nature.

However, the outrageousness of associations such as the moon with a green lizard also reveals a specifically Futurist ambivalence in its treatment of sacred imagery. The opening chapters both touched upon the tension in the Futurist (and particularly Maiakovskian) metaphor between desecrating the sacred and sanctifying the profane (itself part of a redefinition of the separate roles of poetry and prose). This characteristic is particularly evident in Babel''s transformations of the moon into a kind of Whore of Babylon (Revelation 17). Its traditional poetic quality of austere purity is debased by being likened to a cheap earring ['Луна висела над двором, как дешевая серьга'].[59] The moon's celestial chastity similarly falls in the following images:

> По городу слонялась бездомная луна.[60]

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[56] Ibid., p. 224.
[57] Ibid., pp. 101, 169.
[58] Ibid., p. 228.
[59] Ibid., p. 132.
[60] Ibid., p. 120.

[A homeless moon loitered about the town.]

Медлительная луна выползла из-за туч и остановилась на обнаженном Сашкином колене <...> луна шлялась по небу, как побирушка.[61]
[The sluggish moon crawled out from behind the clouds and stopped on Sashka's bare knee <...> the moon loafed about the sky like a beggar-woman].

The story 'Ivany' ['The Ivans'] provides another example of apocalyptic imagery treated in this non-deferential manner:

Ночь летела ко мне на резвых лошадях. Вопль обозов оглашал вселенную. На земле, опоясанной визгом, потухали дороги. Звезды выползли из прохладного брюха ночи, и брошенные села воспламенялись над горизонтом.[62]
[Night flew at me on swift horses. The howl of the transports resounded through the universe. On the earth, girdled with screams, the roads died out. The stars crawled out of the night's cool belly, and abandoned villages flared up over the horizon.]

The vision of night flying on horses once again evokes the riders of Revelation, particularly in juxtaposition with the cataclysmic imagery of the universal howl. In this context, the stars 'crawling' out of the night's belly also has a sinister, apocalyptic tenor; yet at the same time the quasi-Futurist metaphor deflates the exalted, poetic status of the stars and night by conflating them with the most earthly image of the belly. Indeed, this image is reminiscent enough of Maiakovskii's 'cloud in trousers' to suggest direct influence.

The irreverence of such juxtapositions distances Babel''s cosmology from literal understandings of the apocalypse myth.[63] On the other hand, in Babel''s application, as for the Futurists, the familiarization of the sky also involves the poeticization of profane images such as bellies and prostitutes. More specifically, such metaphorical manifestations of the cosmic realm in the tangible world replicate the dynamics of the apocalypse, itself a unification of the heavenly and terrestrial, and therefore remind us of the influence of that myth upon the

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[61] Ibid., p. 206.
[62] Ibid., p. 198.
[63] This is emphasized by comparison of Babel''s moon and stars with the treatment of the night sky by Bulgakov, another writer applying apocalyptic imagery to the Revolution without endorsing a religious interpretation. *The White Guard* is another novel born of personal experience of the western edge of the Revolution and also uses the book of Revelation (which supplies an epigraph) as a subtext. Here, the stars are an emblem of otherworldly perfection and a comforting eternal counterpoint to the temporal disaster on earth: 'Все пройдет. <...> Меч исчезнет, а вот звезды останутся, когда и тени наших тел и дел не останется на земле. <...> Так почему же мы не хотим обратить свой взгляд на них?' [Everything will pass. <...> The sword will disappear, and yet the stars will remain, after the shadows of our bodies and deeds no longer linger on the earth. <...> So why do we not want to turn our gaze on them?]. Mikhail Bulgakov, *Belaia gvardiia, Zhizn' Gospodina de Mol'era, Rasskazy* (Minsk: Mastatskaia Litaratura, 1985), p. 246.

transformative aesthetics of Russian modernism. As such, the Johannine image of plummeting stars is particularly eloquent, and progenitor of Babel''s various versions of heaven brought down to earth.[64]

Spatial Form and Revolutionary Time

Both Babel''s association of the Civil War with the Futurist tour as 'revolutionizing' forces and his use of transformative, quasi-Futurist metaphors place the author within the tradition of presenting Russia's modernist and revolutionary period as one of crisis and transfiguration. Having established these thematic and stylistic connections with Russian modernist apocalypticism, we can pose the question of the extent to which, beyond the level of juxtapositional metaphor, the broader, structural heterogeneity of *Red Cavalry* evokes a situation in which events have ceased to flow in sequence. Does Babel''s structure represent some sort of end-condition, wherein things are reorganized (bringing chaos and / or revelation) and time is defamiliarized or suspended? In other words, does Babel''s structural fragmentation have a relationship to the spatial aesthetic, perhaps reinforcing, as in *The Twelve* and *Whirlwind Russia* (and more recently *The Naked Year*), the motif of the elemental storm?

When considering Babel''s purported spatialism in the specific context of Russian apocalypticism, it is valuable to take into account the alternative influence of European (and especially Parisian) modernism upon the author, and how this context might inform his attitude to the possibilities and significance of modernist devices. In doing so, we can draw upon Babel''s more explicit statements about art, but also the artistic ideal in *Red Cavalry* represented by Pan Apolek, painter of church frescos and biblical images for the local populace. Apolek stands out from the plethora of pseudo-artists in *Red Cavalry*, not only as a professional, but as the only one whose aesthetic system makes a mark on Liutov's own. The narrator takes a kind of vow of discipleship, and this context is underlined by his listening to Apolek's 'gospel' [евангелие] of Christ's union with Deborah.[65] Numerous

[64] Given more space, it would be interesting to explore parallels in Babel''s other fiction. The Odessan Jewish gangsters share the some of the Cossacks' 'Futurist' characteristics, and Benia Krik, for instance, was capable of pulling heaven to earth: 'Если бы к небу и к земле были приделаны кольца, вы схватили бы эти кольца и притянули бы небо к земле.' Babel', *Detstvo*, p. 246.
[65] Ibid., p. 113.

scholars have spoken of Apolek's all-accepting, 'pagan' capacity to reveal the beautiful and spiritual in all nature, including the lowly. It has therefore been widely assumed that Apolek's name derives from the god Apollo (a contention supported by a cluster of Apollonian motifs).[66] Apollo, god of the sun, was also both the companion of the muses and the god that spoke through the Delphic oracle, and therefore a useful emblem if Babel' wished to propose a transformative revelation accomplished through aesthetic means, as suggested by his 'Futurist' treatment of the stars.[67]

Yet Apolek's name yields another reference, which suggests a literary method with which Liutov might realize Apolek's all-encompassing vision. Like the Cossack-Futurists, the name points to Babel''s avant-garde sympathies. While many commentators have traced Apolek's genealogy to Apollo, apparently none has associated him with the poet Guillaume Apollinaire, inventor of the term *surréaliste* and propagandist of cubism. The fact that Babel' goes to the trouble of supplying Apolek's full name, Apollinarii (Latinized 'Apollinarius' in David McDuff's translation), heightens the resemblance to the poet, born Wilhelm-*Apollinaris* de Kostrowitzky.[68] Apart from similar names, parallels can be drawn regarding their mysterious biographies and traits. As in the case of Apolek, Apollinaire's origins are ambiguous. His mother was a Polish aristocrat who settled in Rome and then Paris, so Apolek's arrival from the West might be conceived as a reciprocal image of Apollinaire's westward migration or an imaginary homecoming. The identity of Apollinaire's father is unconfirmed, although the poet neglected to discourage anecdotes that he was the product of a liaison between his mother (who was then living in the Vatican) and the Pope.[69] This piece of gossip would not only have appealed to Babel''s and Apolek's predilection for apocryphal stories combining the holy and earthly or sexual, but more specifically resounds in Apolek's own tale of Christ compassionately sleeping with Deborah on her wedding night.

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[66] In fact, Robert Mann claims that Apolek consists of both Apollonian and Dionysian elements. Robert Mann, *The Dionysian Art of Isaac Babel* (Oakland, CA: Barbary Coast, 1994), pp. 24-33.
[67] Another coincidence of Apolek's name with the referential spheres of *Red Cavalry* is the presence of an *Apollyon* ['Аполлион' in the Russian synodal Bible] in the Apocalypse (Revelation 9. 6) as the angel of the bottomless pit. It seems likely that Apollyon derives from Apollo – another pagan who disguised himself to survive the Christianization of the text. Lawrence at least states this derivation as fact (see Lawrence, *Apocalypse*, p. 110).
[68] Babel', *Detstvo*, p. 115; Isaak Babel', *Collected Stories*, trans. by D. McDuff (London: Penguin, 1994), p. 106.
[69] See Margaret Davies, *Apollinaire* (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1964), p. 1.

Furthermore, in the paragraph following the revelation of Apolek's full name Liutov describes Apollinarii's painting of the Magi. In one of their visages 'мерцало лисьей усмешкой старушечье личико Льва XIII' [twinkled with a foxy grin the old-womanish face of Leo XIII]: in other words, Pope at the time of Apollinaire's birth – and conception.[70] The knowing grin in proximity to an infant which could not be his emphasizes the suggestiveness.

Apolek's paintings function similarly to Babel''s metaphoric juxtapositions of the heavenly and worldly. In the nativity scene Leo XIII is holding a Chinese rosary. The fallen world around Apolek is incorporated into his view of the sacred:

> узнали в апостоле Павле Янека, хромого выкреста, и в Марии Магдалине – еврейскую девушку Эльку, дочь неведомых родителей и мать многих подзаборных детей.[71]
> [in the apostle Paul they recognized Janek, the lame convert, and in Mary Magdalene the Jewish girl El'ka, daughter of unknown parents and mother of numerous waifs found over the fence.]

Apolek's Christ is startlingly local:

> курчавый жиденок с клочковатой бородкой и низким, сморщенным лбом. Впалые щеки его были накрашены кармином, над закрывшимися от боли глазами выгнулись тонкие рыжие брови.
> Рот его был разодран, как губа лошади...[72]
> [a curly-haired little Yid with a shaggy little beard and a low, wrinkled forehead. His sunken cheeks were made up with carmine, and thin ginger eyebrows bent over eyes closed in pain.
> His mouth was lacerated like a horse's lip...]

Apolek thus introduces to Liutov a modern attitude to the world that challenges absolute hierarchies. If Apolek's paintings provide a counterpart to Babel''s juxtapositions within single images, his alter-ego Apollinaire is Babel''s correlative in literary structure. As stated in chapter one, Apollinaire developed the technique of *simultanéisme*, which sets forth a pluralistic image of the present in its spatial and cultural breadth (including remnants of the past), often juxtaposing its new and traditional elements, and contrasting tones and registers. This multiplication of perspective, strongly influenced by the cubist scene to which the poet was close, obviously has a strong affinity with Frank's spatial paradigm. Therefore, if Babel''s

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[70] Babel', *Detstvo*, p. 116. Pope Leo XIII was elected in 1878 and died in 1903; Wilhelm-Apollinaris de Kostrowitzky was born in 1880.
[71] Ibid., p. 116.
[72] Ibid., p. 187.

Cossacks contain a subtle homage to Russian modernism and Futurism, Pan Apollinaire connects the author to European modernism and cubism.

A glance at one of Apollinaire's best known poems, 'Zone', reveals juxtapositions of elevated and lowly subject matter similar to those in *Red Cavalry*.[73] Encompassing a plurality of experience and effortlessly passing through a variety of geographical locations, the poem combines religious imagery (including a pope!), ancient myth and modern technology. Moreover, some of Apollinaire's specific images are remarkably Babelian. For example, the beheaded sun ['Soleil cou coupé'] with which 'Zone' ends, foreshadows Babel''s association of eternal bodies with corruptible ones.[74] Indeed, it closely resembles Babel''s 'Оранжевое солнце катится по небу, как отрубленная голова' [An orange sun rolls across the sky like a severed head] from 'Crossing the Zbruch'.[75] Perhaps in recognizing his debt, Babel' is also making a statement of intent. While Apolek's portraits mix the sacred and profane in the spirit of Apollinaire, it is his new disciple Liutov-Babel' who, working in the writer's medium and free from church patronage, is in a position to bring literary modernism back from the West and reapply its tenets to Russia.

The all-embracing vision of both Apolek and Apollinaire – and therefore the implications of their composite forms – is distinguished from Russian modernism by their lack of the apocalypse myth as a contextualizing narrative with the potential to unify disparate elements. Instead, they assign aesthetic (and therefore spiritual) value to everything in nature, and Babel' shares this 'pagan' attachment to the material world, as opposed to yearning for a higher one. This is also consistent with his relationship to Futurists such as Maiakovskii, who tend to anchor their reaching for the stars in earthly imagery. Indeed, Falen suggests that Babel''s references to celestial bodies – whose Futurist aspect we have already discussed – evoke a 'pre-Copernican, almost paganly animistic universe'.[76]

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[73] Guillaume Apollinaire, *Oeuvres poétiques* (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1956), pp. 39-44.
[74] Ibid., p. 44.
[75] Babel', *Detstvo*, p. 101. Another image in *Zone*, showing the hands of the clocks in the Jewish quarter turning backward ['Les aiguilles de l'horloge du quartier juif vont à rebours', Apollinaire, p. 42], curiously chimes with Liutov's reaction to the 'backward', tradition-bound Jews he encounters in *Red Cavalry*.
[76] Falen, pp. 124-25.

One might add that the influence of a Jewish tradition which recognizes the presence of the divine in the material world would probably have heightened Babel''s receptiveness to the kind of post-Nietzschean 'pagan aestheticism' to be found in Apollinaire and other modernists. Indeed, both these values and their association with Babel''s Jewish background can be detected in another statement of artistic ideal. The manifesto 'Odessa', mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, similarly emphasizes the verve and variety of life (found in his city of origin) as the basis for a new literature. Babel' associates Odessa's cherished cosmopolitanism with the symbol of the sun. Odessan sunshine is contrasted with the grey skies of Petersburgian literature, and the mission of the prophesied Literary Messiah is to introduce the sun to Russia. (Maksim Gor'kii, a harbinger of the predicted saviour, is 'первый человек, заговоривший в русской книге о солнце' [the first person to have spoken about the sun in a Russian book].)[77] The sun illuminates and supports the diverse vitality of Odessa, and similarly Pan Apolek's New Testament scenes, with their 'pagan' acceptance of everything, including the ugly and evil (as Gareth Williams remarks), are flooded with sunlight.[78] This of course reminds us of the other lineage of Apolek's name, from the sun-god Apollo.

The image of the sun, both in 'Odessa' and linked to Apolek, is therefore associated with a desire for art to embrace the world in all its heterogeneity: to introduce the experience of Odessa and the vision of Apollinaire to Russian literature. We must therefore be aware of the influence of Western European cubism and its levelling of hierarchies when examining Babel''s polyphonic structures. On the other hand, as Russian Futurists' and Symbolists' interest in Nietzsche demonstrates, Eastern and Western versions of aesthetic reconstruction of the world overlap. Apolek's 'gospel' and Liutov's apostolic dedication to him, as well as the Literary Messiah from 'Odessa', suggest a point of dialogue with religious Russian modernism. Furthermore, the symbol of the sun is itself rich in messianic connotations: Christ, Pushkin in Russian cultural messianism, and the dawning sun and radiant future of communism. Williams asserts that the sun in *Red Cavalry* 'accompanies war, the

[77] Babel', 'Odessa', p. 273.
[78] Williams, p. 311.

means of the revolution, and it also acts as a leitmotif for the end – a Communist society.'[79]

Having made this exploration of Babel''s encoded statements about plurality in artistic vision, we can proceed to examine his prose structures and the question of how they relate to his representation of time in the midst of crisis and renewal. In the aforementioned 'Ornamentalism and Modernism', Carden's primary objective is to relate Frank's spatial theory to the first generation of Russian modernist prose, yet she concludes by projecting her comparison onto the second generation. She finds Babel' the truest heir to Belyi, Khlebnikov and Remizov, submitting that he:

> grasped the fundamental unity between the thematic and stylistic principles of Modernism because he was a man of broad culture, who was also well acquainted with Flaubert and French literature and thus could go back to Modernism's roots. Babel''s creation of a new kind of structure in the short story was [based] upon the method of analogy of Modern poetry. <...> The concise paragraphs of Babel''s stories are like the fragments of a mosaic which have been carefully fitted into place.[80]

Carden returns, briefly, to this theme in her monograph on Babel':

> The stories are 'spatial' <...> in Frank's special sense. Each must be held in the head and 'read' in an instant. They are whole units that can only be understood as whole units – as instantaneous and complete apprehensions of experience. The Babel' story is a carefully limited space, a canvas into which he paints the significant word-objects before our eyes. As they emerge we recognize them and say, "Ah, a church!" "Ah, a man!" But having 'recognized' the elements of the story, we have not yet understood the story. To understand we must take note of the significant relationships that exist among the objects in the space Babel' has created to contain them.[81]

For Babel', whose style has been likened to cinematic montage and described as kaleidoscopic, juxtaposition of disparate elements is a governing principle at arguably every level of his writing: complex individual images, as discussed above, his 'cinematic' cutting from sentence to sentence, and in the overarching thematic and symbolic strands from story to story.[82] As Carol Luplow observes, 'contrastive

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[79] Ibid., p. 309.
[80] Patricia Carden, 'Ornamentalism and Modernism', in *Russian Modernism: Culture and the Avant-Garde, 1900–1930*, ed. by George Gibian and H.W. Tjalsma (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1976), pp. 49-64 (pp. 62-63).
[81] Carden, *Art*, p. 48.
[82] See Marc Schreurs, *Procedures of Montage in Isaak Babel's Red Cavalry* (Amsterdam, Atlanta: Rodopi, 1989); Victor Terras, 'Line and Colour: The Structure of Babel's Short Stories in *Red Cavalry*', in *Red Cavalry: A Critical Companion*, ed. by Charles Rougle (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996), pp. 115-34 (p. 125).

juxtaposition is a dominant structural principle in Babel's language as well as in his thematics, characterization, and imagery.'[83]

However, as implied by Luplow's word 'contrastive', the timeless spiritual unity which this method intimates to Frank is not an adequate summary of the effect Babel' achieves. If Babel''s writing is 'spatial', it forms a particular category within the typology, distinguished by its constant foundation upon oppositions. Just as *Red Cavalry* places irreconcilable ideological and experiential viewpoints (for example, Jewish, Cossack, and Polish) face to face, there are throughout the text pungent juxtapositions on stylistic and structural levels. Luplow describes the 'incongruous combinations <...> achieved by the description of something horrible in a laconic, unemotional tone <...> or conversely by the description of something horrible or crudely naturalistic in poetic style'.[84] This dislocation of register and content impressed contemporary critics such as Vladimir Veshnev, and was famously expressed by Shklovskii (with the help of a quotation from Iurii Tynianov):[85]

> "Смысл и сила такого употребления слова с лексической окраской, противоположной интонационной окраске – именно в ощущении этого несовпадения" (Юр. Тынянов, 'Проблема стихотворного языка'). Смысл приема Бабеля состоит в том, что он одним голосом говорит и о звездах и о триппере.[86]
> ["The idea and force of such a usage of a word whose lexical tone is opposed to its intonational tone lies in this very tension" (Tynianov, *The Problem of Poetic Language*). The basis of Babel''s device consists in speaking in the same voice about both the stars and gonorrhoea.]

Shklovskii's choice of 'stars and gonorrhoea' for his colourful distillation of Babel''s style reminds us of the instances of the 'descent' of heavenly bodies within metaphors by transferring poetic images into a prosaic context. Yet the remark also applies to Babel''s structural juxtapositions, in which a consistent narratorial voice relays violent leaps in thematic material. The *skaz* narration of 'The Letter', discussed above, is one example of Babel''s modernist editing in order to maximize shocking impact. Liutov's narration applies the same technique in a more knowing manner. In 'Berestechko' horrific images are introduced in the midst of mundane, without transition or change in neutrally descriptive register:

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[83] Carol Luplow, *Isaac Babel's Red Cavalry* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1982), p. 92.
[84] Ibid., p. 93.
[85] V. Veshnev, 'Poeziia banditizma (I. Babel')', *Molodaia gvardiia*, 7-8 (1924), 274-80.
[86] Viktor Shklovskii, 'I. Babel', kriticheskii romans', *Lef*, 5.2 (1924), 152-55 (p. 154).

> Бойцы дремали в высоких седлах. Песня журчала, как пересыхающий ручей. Чудовищные трупы валялись на тысячелетних курганах.
> [The soldiers were drowsing in their high saddles. A song murmured like a stream that was running dry. Monstrous corpses were scattered over thousand year-old burial mounds.]
>
> На столбах висели объявления о том, что военкомдив Виноградов прочтет вечером доклад о Втором конгрессе Коминтерна. Прямо перед моими окнами несколько казаков расстреливали за шпионаж старого еврея с серебряной бородой.[87]
> [On the notice boards were announcements that divisional military commissar Vinogradov would be reading a lecture in the evening about the Second Congress of the Comintern. Directly under my window several Cossacks were shooting an old Jew with a silver beard for espionage.]

These juxtapositions display the same lack of transitions and half tones which prompted Mochulskii to compare Belyi's prose (and Frank Proust's) to impressionist painting: it 'produces an impression of brilliant multi-colour, sharp contrasts, unexpected dissonance'.[88] However, the frequently violent aspect of Babel''s juxtapositions sets *Red Cavalry* apart from those examples, and suggests a closer relationship to recent polyphonic depictions of the Revolution as a cataclysm. *The Twelve* and *The Naked Year*, two of the most talked-about literary responses to the Revolution, had both employed an apparent structural chaos to evoke the 'apocalyptic' turmoil of the time. Babel''s juxtapositions of clashing elements convey Revolutionary upheavals on a visceral level, but with a greater intensity than Blok's or Pil'niak's. The result of the constant infliction of shocks (such as those quoted above) on the reader's sensibilities is to construct a taut, polarized world. David Danow terms *Red Cavalry* 'non-dialogic' in the sense that there is almost no responsive attitude among the various speakers; this verdict can be extended beyond analysis of direct speech and applied to the many instances of contiguous but incongruent or clashing sentences and paragraphs belonging to the authorial voice.[89]

If *Red Cavalry*'s chaotic heterogeneity mirrors the disorder and conflict of the Revolution, does its juxtaposition of narratologically unconnected elements and the consequent suppression of narrative line translate into a timeless, 'apocalyptic' effect (as we have suggested in the case of *The Twelve*)? On examination, one

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[87] Babel', *Detstvo*, pp. 167, 168.
[88] Konstantin Mochulskii, *Andrei Bely: His Life and Works*, trans. by N. Szalavitz (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1977), p. 33.
[89] David K. Danow, 'A Poetics of Inversion: The Non-Dialogic Aspect in Isaac Babel's *Red Cavalry*', *Modern Language Review*, 86.4 (1991), 937-53 (p. 937).

immediately finds that *Red Cavalry* is not as radically 'spatial' as, for instance, Belyi's symphonies. However, Babel''s manipulation of structure does affect his representation of time, moreover in a manner that contributes to the cataclysmic subtext. The fact that this does not wholly conform to Frank's model is exemplified by moments at which the 'montage' technique creates a sinister quickening, rather than suspension, of time.

There are several occasions where Babel' dramatizes the threshold between day and night by acceleration. Parataxis in 'Crossing the Zbruch' achieves an effect suggestive of the calamities of Revelation, where waters turn bitter (Revelation 8. 10-11) or to blood (8. 8-9) and a third part of the stars, sun and moon are blackened (8. 7). Three sentences pass through afternoon and evening into night without indication of the elapsed time between them:

> Оранжевое солнце катится по небу, как отрубленная голова, нежный свет загорается в ущельях туч, штандарты заката веют над нашими головами. Запах вчерашней крови и убитых лошадей каплет в вечернюю прохладу. Почерневший Збруч шумит и закручивает пенистые узлы своих порогов.[90]
> [An orange sun rolls across the sky like a severed head, the gentle light glows in the ravines of the storm clouds, the standards of the sunset float above our heads. The smell of yesterday's blood and slain horses drips into the evening coolness. The Zbruch, turned black, roars and pulls tight the foamy knots of its torrents.]

The abrupt shifts in time, inconsonant with the expectations of the lyric-descriptive mode in which the passage had commenced, convey the narrative towards its revelation. Similarly, in 'Afon'ka Bida' nothing suggests the passing of time between recording the third hour of the afternoon ['Шел третий час июльского просторного дня'] and the rise of the glittering sky ['Над Лешнювом встало блещущее небо'] which presages Afon'ka's tragedy.[91]

The appearance of the cataclysmic image of the suddenly darkening sky in metaphors suggests that this structural simulation is intentional. An above-quoted passage describes 'night flying on swift horses'. Elsewhere, Babel' writes that 'Вечер взлетел к небу, как стая птиц' [Evening flew up toward the sky like a flock of birds], and, albeit rather ironically, in 'Vecher' ['Evening']: 'На небе гаснет косоглазый фонарь провинциального солнца' [In the sky the squinting

[90] Babel', *Detstvo*, p. 101.
[91] Ibid., pp. 178, 179.

lamp of the provincial sun is extinguished].[92] 'Kostel v Novograde' ['The Catholic Church in Novograd'] provides a final example of hyperbolic, almost supernatural, darkening:

> за окном в саду под черной страстью неба переливается аллея. Жаждущие розы колышутся во тьме. Зеленые молнии пылают в куполах.[93]
> [in the garden outside the window the avenue of trees changes colour beneath the black passion of the sky. Thirsting roses sway in the darkness. Green lightning blazes in the cupolas.]

While such accelerations seem to limit the applicability of the spatial theory to *Red Cavalry*, they exist alongside instances in which the temporal element is indeed suppressed. This coexistence of spatial and hyper-temporal form, while failing to neatly illustrate Frank's paradigm, complements the eschatological myth, which itself involves both the (static) End and the (dynamic) approach of that End.

Non-linear, non-temporal structures can be observed at each of the levels of juxtaposition in *Red Cavalry*: sentence-to-sentence, the organization of a whole story, and the structure of the cycle in its entirety. One must be cautious about imputing to them excessive significance. Babel''s restructuring is not so radical (nor his worldview so mystical) that one can necessarily apprehend it as an intentional intervention in the reader's perception of time. Moreover, subversions of narrative order quite evidently can have numerous functions in addition to altering the representation of time. However, with these qualifications in mind, useful observations can be made about the sense of time created by the fragmentation of expected order.

On the sentence-to-sentence level, Babel''s juxtapositions of narratologically unconnected images serve various functions besides impacting on the sense of time. The two passages from 'Berestechko' cited above exemplify the way in which juxtapositions lay bare meaningful thematic relationships beneath the surface of narrative. They connect the arrival of the Cossacks and the beneficent aims of the Revolution with the deeper reality of war, and, as suggested above, they viscerally convey the polarization of the situation. However, this constant contextualizing also affects the representation of time, because it multiplies the 'now'. Babel' presents us with a Revolutionary present that contains a plethora of simultaneous, yet

[92] Ibid., pp. 224, 175.
[93] Ibid., p. 104.

incongruous, phenomena. While images may be spatially close together in the narrative situation, their dissonance – the present and the ancient burial mounds, the drowsing and the horrors of war – extends the present beyond its expected bounds. In more traditional narrative forms such disparate images are usually separated by the passing of time and the occurrence of events; by placing them side by side in the narrative present, Babel' condenses that span of time to a unified experience in a moment of time. While he lacks the theurgic conceptions relevant to Belyi's manipulation of time in his symphonies, his effect does non-mystically convey the cataclysmic mood of the Revolution as a point in time upon which the past, the future, and conflicting interests are projected. The supra-temporal effect relies not only on the breadth of Liutov's gaze (taking on a plurality of simultaneously occurring images) but on the shocking incongruence of what he sees. For instance, it would be difficult to argue that the reader's sense of time were altered if Babel' followed the images of drowsy Cossacks and the murmuring song with those of shrubs and grazing rabbits, instead of burial mounds and monstrous corpses.

On the level of the overall organization of the cycle, *Red Cavalry* again exhibits a restriction of linear, time-bound forms. In part, this is determined by Babel''s chosen medium, for the short story cycle is more inherently suited to representing the world in cross-section (and less suited to representing a part of it in gradual development) than the novel. Narrative threads do link clusters of stories, with certain characters and plotlines re-emerging: for instance, Afon'ka Bida's, Il'ia's and Khlebnikov's narratives spread over more than one story, and 'Rabbi' ['The Rabbi'] is a direct extension of 'Gedali'. However, these examples of narrative continuity exist amid a larger body of free-standing stories. These feature characters (such as Matvei Pavlichenko, Prishchepa, D'iakov and the *skaz* narrators) who make just one appearance in *Red Cavalry*, and events that are causally unrelated, and therefore belong to no succession in narrative time. The cycle registers no more than a hazy awareness of how Liutov's experiences relate to the greater perspective of the military campaign in which he is participating. The opening story is a personal crossing into enemy territory, and toward the end of the cycle, out of context, the reader learns:

– Мы проиграли кампанию, – бормочет Волков и всхрапывает.

– Да, – говорю я.[94]
["We have lost the campaign," murmurs Volkov and naps.
"Yes," I say.]

However, the interceding events, including military episodes, do not in any way transport us from the symbolic beginning to defeat and, indeed, the cycle concludes with the doomed campaign still in progress. Indeed, the cycle lacks an 'ending' in the sense of a resolution or summing up of the major issues of the work. (This impression is emphasized by our knowledge that 'Argamak' and, in some later editions, 'Potselui' ['The Kiss'] were appended to the original end).

In the absence of strong linear development, *Red Cavalry* is held together more by a predominant authorial sensibility and its representation in the persona of Liutov, as numerous scholars have noted.[95] The consciousness of this involved author-narrator functions as the only point of connection for disparate perceptions, and Babel', in Liutov's voice, forges associations between narratologically separate stories with recurring motifs and themes. It would be difficult to argue that even Liutov, as a consistently present character, undergoes any significant development or change in consciousness. Instead, his consistently dualistic nature is gradually revealed to the reader. Apparently critical moments in his experience do not inform later stories. For instance, there is an inferred anachrony in the fact that Liutov's initiation to barbarism in 'My First Goose' occurs immediately after 'Gedali', in which his stance is that of the experienced revolutionary who has accepted the price of violence. The two stories have a significant relationship to one another: the sequence serves to reveal the artificiality of Liutov's pose in conversation with Gedali. However, this is a relationship in theme rather than narrative, thus in 'space' rather than time. This is representative of *Red Cavalry* as a whole. An array of stark and revelatory experiences build up an increasingly detailed picture of Liutov's interaction with the Civil War, but not an account of change in either the narrator or his environment. In this sense, the broader architecture of *Red Cavalry* depicts a breadth of experience at a point in time rather than developments within a span of time, which justifies Danuta Mendelson's characterization of it as an 'episodic

[94] Babel', *Detstvo*, p. 212.
[95] See for example Carden, *Art*, p. 126, and Luplow, p. 100.

novel in the modernist tradition'.[96]

We have, therefore, discovered structural patterns akin to those Joseph Frank describes as spatial, while finding no evidence that the consequent 'timelessness' is intended as a literal endorsement of apocalypse myth. On the other hand, Babel''s use of eschatological imagery suggests that the heterogeneous present of the cycle evokes a cataclysmic and critical point in time, one of heightened conflict and confusion, and into which the past and future are subsumed.

Apocalypse and Epiphany

Babel''s secularism might be held to distance his non-linear leaps and fragmented structures from the aesthetic-transformative tradition of Symbolism and its successors, as well as from the transcendent effect imputed to the spatial style. However, such a response would fail to take into account the revelatory experience described by many of Babel''s readers. One scholar characterizes the impact of his abrupt shifts in perspective and mood as 'going from innocence to knowledge in a flash' and another as 'like a sudden flash of light [briefly illuminating] the several essentials of a scene in such a way as to leave the spectator stunned and grasping for a coherent explanation'.[97] This effect can be best described in relation to textual structures on the level of individual stories (though it is not exclusive to them). Carden's declaration that Babel''s fragmented stories 'can be properly understood only if the reader is able to re-establish by a *leap of intuition* the hidden connection among the parts' and description of an '*instantaneous and complete* apprehension of experience' associate this revelatory sensation with her application of Frank's spatial theory.[98] In particular, the 'instantaneousness' of connections reminds one of Frank's account of the 'second', retrospective reading of the spatial text as a simultaneous whole. Yet there is a need to give a more precise account of how Babel''s stories relate to the model.

It is clear enough that, while *Red Cavalry* stories juxtapose heterogeneous elements, they do usually contain a linear, narrative element, which distinguishes Babel' from the radical spatialism of *Waste Land* and the *Second Symphony*. However, Babel''s

[96] Danuta Mendelson, *Metaphor in Babel's Short Stories* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1981), p. 114.
[97] Carden, *Art*, p. 203, and Falen, p. 118.
[98] Carden, 'Ornamentalism', p. 63. Italics added.

texts repeatedly promote the spatial perspective by incorporating points which facilitate re-evaluative 'second readings' of whole. This often involves either a narrative revelation, showing previous events in a new context, or an abrupt shift in tone, reflecting an altered attitude to the preceding narration. This aspect has been observed by several scholars. Luplow writes that such points 'suddenly illumine the preceding series of episodes, descriptions, and impressions and thereby unite them' and Alice Lee states that 'the central structural and stylistic element in many of Babel''s *Red Cavalry* stories is <...> a revelatory moment'.[99] Falen is one of a number of (especially Western) scholars who have affirmed that 'epiphany plays a major role both spiritually and technically'.[100] The strongest examples of these 'panoramic' points occur at the end of a story, therefore making the point of climax a re-evaluation of the text. However, there are subtler equivalents, which serve to unify and reinterpret smaller or less clearly defined units of text.

In 'Crossing the Zbruch' the narrator's unsympathetic attitude to the Jews with whom he has been billeted (at first portrayed grotesquely, jumping 'по-обезьяньи, как японцы в цирке' [monkey-fashion, like Japanese at the circus]) is abruptly challenged by the realization that they have undergone an unimaginable trauma, and by the emotional authority of the pregnant woman's lament: '"я хочу знать, где еще на всей земле вы найдете такого отца, как мой отец..."' [I want to know where on this whole earth you'll find another father like my father].[101] This revelation also unites the various elements of the story. It explains the squalor of the Jews' abode (it is the aftermath of a massacre and humiliation, not the way they live). More generally, the fertility and the violence of nature in the overwrought descriptive passages of the first part of the story, and the 'initiation' motif of border crossing and submersion all acquire concrete resonance in this ending.[102]

Each revelatory moment has the effect of shifting the narrative perspective and, to varying extents, Liutov's attitude (along with that of the reader, who predominantly

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[99] Luplow, pp.109-10, and Alice Lee, 'Epiphany in Babel's Red Cavalry', *Russian Literary Triquarterly*, 2 (1972), 249-260 (p. 250).

[100] Falen, p. 168. The Joycean concept of epiphany has also applied to Babel''s writing by Lee, Luplow, and Lionel Trilling, 'Introduction to the first English translation (1955) of Babel''s collected stories' in Isaac Babel, *Collected Stories*, trans. by D. McDuff (London: Penguin, 1994), pp. 339-64 (pp. 345-46).

[101] Babel', *Detstvo*, pp. 101-02.

[102] Falen, p. 141, compares the immersion to that which 'traditionally precedes a spiritual transformation'.

sees through Liutov's eyes). A number of these epiphanies are based on narrative events, such as the pregnant Jew's 'cry from soul', which unexpectedly re-contextualize preceding elements.[103] In such cases, the transformation of the perception of a story takes place within the reader – in parallel, we assume, with a transformation in the narrator, silenced by the end of the story and because the revelation speaks for itself. In other instances it is Liutov's own change in mood that effects the 'spatial' reconsideration of the whole story.[104] There are several stories in which Liutov is more actively involved where the fragmented narrative mode gives way to a lyrical one. This latter situation of narrative stasis invites us to contemplate the various parts of the (relatively dynamic) narrative as a spatial entirety. In 'Posle boia' ['After the Battle'], 'Pan Apolek', 'My First Goose' and other stories such lyrical epiphanies occur in the solitude and repose of evening or night, after and in contrast to the bustle and action of day. Nightfall frequently provides a natural cessation of narrative, leaving the narrator to his thoughts and lyrical reflections. This provides a setting 'outside' the plot in which diurnal, polyphonic conflicts are internalized and processed psychologically.

'After the Battle' passes from a narrative of action, culminating in Akinfiev's anger at Liutov for failing to shoot during combat, to the narrator's emotionally heightened nocturnal world:

> Первая звезда блеснула надо мной и упала в тучи. Дождь стегнул ветлы и обессилел. Вечер взлетел к небу, как стая птиц, и тьма надела на меня мокрый свой венец. Я изнемог и, согбенный под могильной короной, пошел вперед, вымаливая у судьбы простейшее из умений – уменье убить человека.[105]
> [A first star shone above me and fell into the storm clouds. Rain lashed the white willows and abated. Evening flew up toward the sky like a flock of birds, and darkness laid its damp wreath upon me. I was exhausted and, bent under the sepulchral crown, went forward, begging fate for the simplest of abilities: the ability to kill a man.]

Liutov's detached recounting of events and the associated, tough persona to which he aspires fade as his deeper identity emerges. Without resolving the clashing elements in the story (Akinfiev's values and the narrator's), Babel' transposes them from the external world to an image of Liutov's torn psyche, and thereby

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[103] Luplow's phrase, p. 110.
[104] Lee, p. 249, draws this distinction between lyrical epiphanies, of a phase of mind, and dramatic epiphanies, revealed in speech or gesture.
[105] Babel', *Detstvo*, pp. 224-25.

crystallizes the story. The epiphanic effect relies on the author's combination of concision (the aphoristic final sentence) and the sudden lyricism, revealing an emotional involvement hitherto suppressed.

The ending of 'My First Goose' similarly represents a reappraisal of the story as a whole. In the narrative Liutov has overcome the initial hostility of the Cossacks toward him by killing a goose and roughly instructing an old woman to cook it for him. This modest display of brutality appears a relatively small price to pay for acceptance, and the tension upon which the story is built appears to be resolved as the narrator goes to sleep among his new comrades, their bodies warming each other. Yet the last sentence presents an unexpected glimpse of the imprint of the narrated events on Liutov's soul: 'Я видел сны и женщин во сне, и только сердце мое, обагренное убийством, скрипело и текло.' [I had dreams and dreamt of women, and only my heart, crimsoned with murder, squeaked and overflowed.][106] In the 'overflowing heart' of conscience and poetic sensitivity the various images of the day are sustained, and by reaffirming the story's tension, Babel' subverts its linearity. As in 'After the Battle', the device of encapsulating this shifted perspective in an abrupt and terse final statement accentuates to revelatory effect of perceiving a complex of images in a flash.

'The Ivans' relates a conflict of wills between the two men named in the title, and it appears inevitable that only one Ivan will survive their journey together. The story once again contains a lyrical passage (the beginning of which was quoted above) that breaks from the principal plot:

> Ночь летела ко мне на резвых лошадях. Вопль обозов оглашал вселенную. На земле, опоясанной визгом, потухали дороги. Звезды выползли из прохладного брюха ночи, и брошенные села воспламенялись над горизонтом. Взвалив на себя седло, я пошел по развороченной меже и у поворота остановился по своей нужде. Облегчившись, я застегнулся и почувствовал брызги на моей руке. Я зажег фонарик, обернулся и увидел на земле труп поляка, залитый моей мочой. Она выливалась у него изо рта, брызгала между зубов и стояла в пустых глазницах. Записная книжка и обрывки воззваний Пилсудского валялись рядом с трупом. В тетрадке поляка были записаны карманные расходы, порядок спектаклей в краковском драматическом театре и день рождения женщины по имени Мария-Луиза. Воззванием Пилсудского, маршала и главнокомандующего, я стер вонючую жидкость с черепа неведомого моего брата и ушел, сгибаясь под тяжестью седла.[107]

[106] Ibid., p. 132.
[107] Ibid., p. 198.

> [Night flew at me on swift horses. The howl of the transports resounded through the universe. On the earth, girdled with screams, the roads died out. The stars crawled out of the night's cool belly, and abandoned villages flared up over the horizon. Having slung my saddle over myself, I walked across the havoc-torn boundary field and at a bend stopped to attend to a call of nature. Have relieved myself, I buttoned up and felt splashes on my hand. I switched on my torch, turned and saw on the earth the corpse of a Pole, drowned in my urine. It poured out of his mouth, was splashed between his teeth and lay in his empty eye sockets. A notebook and fragments of Pilsudski's proclamations were scattered beside the corpse. In the Pole's notebook were notes of minor expenses, a schedule of performances at the Krakow Dramatic Theatre and the birthday of a woman named Maria-Luiza. With one of the proclamations of Pilsudski, marshal and commander-in-chief, I wiped the stinking liquid from the skull of my unknown brother and walked away, bent under the weight of the saddle.]

In this case the passage forms an interlude, rather than the conclusion, and therefore does not constitute a climactic revelation. However, as in the previous example, it drastically alters the tenor of the story as a whole and forces the reader to review the narrative in its context. It stands out from the rest of the story because it is the only indication of the narrator's inner world, and once again this alternative perspective is governed by a more reflective and lyrical attitude than that of the main narrative. The authorial-narratorial consciousness provides a space in which conflicting elements come together, not to be resolved, but nonetheless outside the arena of their hostility. Babel''s-Liutov's attitude is simultaneously open to and detached from each of these antagonistic aspects. Consistent with his fraught, multiple identity, as an artist he does not take sides, but sympathizes with all. In this passage from 'The Ivans' the narrator is aesthetically watchful: he registers details of the surrounding scene of devastation, and the poignant jottings that evoke the life which the Pole has lost, familiar in its combination of the banal (minor expenses) and significant (the suggestion of a loved-one). Although it is confined to a tangent, this stance affects our apprehension of the main plot-line by registering a level of narrative consciousness removed from the story. We consequently perceive the tale of enmity between the deserter and his guard in parallel with this image of sympathy and aesthetic engagement, and in the context of Liutov's nocturnal awareness of the greater tragedy of which this apparently minor episode is a part. This example is therefore one of many that support Victor Terras's assertion that, amid Babel''s multiplicity of styles, the lyrical mode and its 'static space' are predominant.[108]

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[108] Terras, pp. 127-28.

The contemplative attitude upon which Babel''s revelatory moments in these instances are based reinforces the association with Frank's theory, because it constructs a perspective from which the reader views the text's polyphonic (yet to some degree linear) narratives from outside, in addition to the dissonant succession in which they unfold. The last example also illustrates the way in which such a 'spatial' contemplation of the whole can impart a 'transcendent' sensation by creating a point of unity which is superior to the rest of the story in the scope of its vision and depth of feeling. A number of stories provide such a perspective by ending with a sudden recording of Liutov's emotional response, following the cool laconicism of the narrative. In addition to 'My First Goose', we can think of the unexpected, concluding declaration of sympathy for Khlebnikov in 'The Story of One Horse'.

Babel''s lyrical-contemplative mode is not confined to recognizably Joycean epiphanies, let alone as 'the' revelation of a particular story. In *Red Cavalry* texts such as 'Kladbishche v Kozine' ['The Cemetery at Kozin'], the two stories featuring Gedali and 'The Rabbi's Son' this voice is predominant, and does not serve as a startling contrast with laconic narration. It can be argued that these stories function in a similar manner to the epiphanies, but on a larger scale. They serve to re-illuminate adjacent or related stories, and more generally to project the artist's holistic consciousness onto the heterogeneous cycle as a whole. One might add that the fact that each of these four stories deal with Babel''s Jewish theme is significant to Sicher's claim that the writer was influenced by a Talmudic logic which draws out meaning from a plurality of disparate texts.[109]

If on this large scale there is a suggestion that the spatial perspective has roots in religious thought, we might ask whether the same is true of the epiphanies and revelatory moods within stories. On examination, one finds that in several instances the stasis of revelation appears in conjunction with, or is preceded by, eschatological imagery or associations. The apocalyptic imagery and quickening of time in 'Crossing the Zbruch' leads to the nocturnal revelation.[110] Similarly, in the

[109] See Sicher, 'Jewishness' (1984), particularly pp. 171, 175.
[110] Although highly unlikely that Babel' was aware of Joyce's use of the term, it is striking that the 'epiphany' at the end (heralded by imagery suggesting the myth of the Second Coming) is couched in that of the manifestation of Christ to the Magi, commemorated in the festival of Epiphany: the expectant mother and revelation to a visitor among the lowliest of conditions.

above-quoted passage from 'The Ivans' the 'night on swift horses' and cataclysmic landscape set the backdrop to a revelation as moving and personal as the wider scene is horrific and universal. Ivan Esaulov among others has pointed out that the motif of baptism runs through *Red Cavalry*.[111] In both of these stories a symbolic and harrowing drenching (in the river Zbruch and the unintentional urination upon the narrator's 'unknown brother') precedes a spiritual revelation. Such details place Babel''s epiphanies within the wider discourse which envisaged the present in terms of a new religion, a Third Testament or apocalyptic shifts, even though the transformation seems to be located within the narrator. Similarly, the epiphany in 'After the Battle' follows the images of the falling star and the accelerated nightfall of evening flying up like a flock of birds. In this context, the sentence preceding the revelation in 'My First Goose' could be regarded as another image of the falling heavens as a lyrical catastrophe. The narrator and Cossacks lie 'под дырявой крышей, пропускавшей звезды' [beneath a roof full of holes that let the stars in].[112]

These concurrences of apocalyptic imagery with revelatory story-structures support the idea that Babel' intended his epiphanies to have an impact comparable to religious experience. Indeed, the imagery plays a crucial role in dramatizing these significant moments: apocalyptic-cataclysmic images amplify the contrasting peacefulness of narratorial mood, and the accelerated end of action and (in certain cases) of day emphasizes the stasis of night. The calamitous atmosphere generated by these devices magnifies the emotional significance of the subsequent revelation, as a thunderclap would lend authority to an ancient prophet.

The revelatory sublimity of such moments also relies upon the fact that Liutov's unifying role situates him, as we have already seen, in the middle of extreme contrasts. Whereas the 'transcendental perspective' of a work such as Belyi's *Second Symphony* relies upon the radically omniscient narrator setting forth a heterogeneous totality of Moscow, *Red Cavalry*'s polyphony is markedly oppositional. Situated in the midst of a bitter war, Liutov attempts to process the incongruence between the exalted aspirations and unpalatable realities of the

[111] Ivan A. Esaulov, 'Eticheskoe i esteticheskoe v poetike I.E. Babelia ("Pan Apolek")', in his *Kategoriia sobornosti v russkoi literature* (Petropavlovsk: Izdatel'stvo Petropavlovskogo universiteta, 1995), pp. 190-208 (pp. 204-05).
[112] Babel', *Detstvo*, p. 104.

struggle, the Apocalypse of Revolution affording visions of both heaven and hell. On one hand, the narrator's mediating position attests to the influence of the Symbolist conception of the poet-prophet, as developed by Futurism. In a very similar manner to the astral-earthly metaphors already discussed, these moments of catastrophic epiphany reveal the coexistence of the sacred and profane in visceral Revolutionary experience, and relate the conflicts present in the architecture of a story (and more broadly in the cycle) to this maximal level of expression. Liutov's threshold positions, situated between horrific, sordid aspects of human action and the elevated potential of human ideal and vision, imbue *Red Cavalry* with the psychological dynamics of the prophet experiencing holy revelations.[113]

On the other hand, we know very well that Liutov's detachment from the poles of experience has more tangible causes than a desire to mystically locate himself at the apocalyptic limen of earth and heaven. It is of course also a product of his ambivalent sense of identity and his alienation as an intellectual and a secular Jew in whom the values and images of both past and assimilated future stake a claim. The epochal, ideological and ethnic conflicts of the war also rage within the authorial persona, who therefore struggles to resolve them. The cartographical borderland of *Red Cavalry* is also a psychological no-man's-land. Situations such as the 'boundary field' in 'The Ivans' and the border river Zbruch may constitute a 'prophetic wilderness' and thus exemplify Babel''s analogies to religious experience; however, they also underline the fact that Liutov, as a Jew in the Russo-Polish conflict and a pacifistic artist in the midst of a war, finds himself caught between binary oppositions. As a consequence, though revelatory in impact, Babel''s epiphanies are intellectually restless. If on one level they function as an aesthetical rendition of a plurality of experience at a critical point in time, the tensions are not neutralized by a mythical or mystical explanation of the Revolution, as one finds to a greater extent in Blok's 'dissonant music'.

The same tension between a transformative, quasi-religious experience and

[113] This association is indebted to the structural anthropologist Edmund Leach, and to Bethea, who applies Leach's analysis to Russian apocalyptic fiction. Leach notes that 'in the Bible, inspired sacred persons, who converse face to face with God, or who, in themselves, have attributes which are partly those of mortal man and partly those of immortal God, almost always experience their inspiration in a 'betwixt and between' locality, described as 'in the wilderness,' which is neither fully in This World nor in The Other.' Bethea, p. 46.

intellectual caution is exhibited in Babel''s handling of another threshold image: that of the sunset. As has already been remarked, the end of the day forms the backdrop to many of the epiphanies in Red Cavalry. The sinisterly accelerated ending in 'Crossing the Zbruch' is the first in a series of hyperbolic sunsets and significant dusks, during which the narrator confronts or reprocesses conflicts illuminated by the day. In a number of these cases, the transformation in attitude takes place during the sunset itself, wherein the narrator's heightened aesthetic responsiveness indicates that he sees events 'in a new light'. Apart from its luminescent beauty, the image has certain associations that make it a potent emblem for revelatory experience. It is another manifestation of the cosmic on earth (or a descent), and it is specifically linked with Babel''s own religious roots. As Sicher notes: 'Evening, which begins the weekly Jewish Sabbath, brings day to an end and heralds the day of rest which is, in Jewish thought, a taste of messianic times and the world to come.'[114] Both the 'rest' and 'taste of messianic times' described chime with Babel''s contemplative, epiphanic evenings. Moreover, in the stories where Liutov deals with his Jewish identity, the setting of the sun provokes in him a nostalgia for the Sabbaths of his childhood and memories of a messianic culture and religious feelings perhaps now inaccessible:

> В субботние кануны меня томит густая печаль воспоминаний. Когда-то в эти вечера мой дед поглаживал желтой бородой томы Ибн-Эзра. <...> Я кружу по Житомиру и ищу робкой звезды. <...> Она мигает и гаснет – робкая звезда...
> Удача пришла ко мне позже, удача пришла перед самым заходом солнца.[115]
> [On the eve of the Sabbath a dense sadness of recollections torments me. Once upon a time on these evenings my grandfather would stroke the volumes of Ibn-Ezra with his yellow beard. <...> I wander around Zhitomir and look for the shy star. <...> It twinkles and fades, the shy star.
> Success came to me later, success came just before the setting of the sun.]

When we consider the beauty of the Sabbath in the context of Revolutionary messianism, such evening scenes appear as instants of revelation at the brink of epochal change.[116]

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[114] Sicher, 'Interference', p. 269.
[115] Babel', *Detstvo*, pp. 124-25.
[116] The sunset as an emblem of new replacing old is not restricted to *Red Cavalry*. For instance, in 'Zakat' ['Sunset'] from Babel''s 'Odessa stories' the tyrannical father Mendel' Krik is violently overcome on a backdrop of lurid images of the sinking sun: 'Оно лилось в тучи, как кровь из распоротого кабана <...>' [It poured into the storm clouds, like blood from a ripped boar <...>]. Ibid., p. 283.

However, there are inevitable tensions between contrasting notions of the 'world to come'. The sunset is also an elegiac symbol, reminding us of the threat to Jewish tradition, the suppression of Jewish identity within the narrator, and the wider destruction wrought by the Revolution. (In contrast to Babel''s sunsets, sunrise and dawn – emblems of beginnings – do not occupy a prominent role.) Liutov's conversation with Gedali concerning the Revolution and its violence against the old world takes place at dusk on a Friday. In the last Jewish-themed story Il'ia, son of the last rabbi of the Chernobyl dynasty and another mirror held to Liutov's ambivalent identity, expires in yet another lyrical sunset, amid the narrator's memories of the sunset in Zhitomir: 'Печальный дождь заката обмыл пыль моих волос' [The sad rain of the sunset washed the dust of my hair].[117] In Il'ia the hope for a secular Sabbath fades with the sun.

Elsewhere in *Red Cavalry* sunsets are associated with the messianic cause of the Revolution. As we have seen, the 'standards of the sunset' [штандарты заката] in 'Crossing the Zbruch' float above the heads of the marching army. Afon'ka Bida rides into and out of the sunset, and a picture album of Rome represents Sidorov's revolutionary dreams: 'Над круглой его спиной блестели зубчатые развалины Капитолия и арена цирка, освещенная закатом.' [Over his round back gleamed the jagged ruins of the Capitol and the arena of the Colosseum, illuminated by the sunset.][118] In each of these examples the setting sun is linked with loss or futility. The march halts at a tragic scene, Afon'ka's sunsets are connected to moments of death, and Rome's 'jagged ruins' offer an eloquent commentary upon Sidorov's unhinged fantasies. In the story 'Evening', set in the time from sunset to settling down for the night, the narrator is in the messianic company of propagandists: 'Три холостые сердца со страстями рязанских Иисусов' [three bachelor hearts with the passions of Riazan' Jesuses], with whom he is linked by the bleeding of his lacerated palms at the end of the story.[119] Here too, Revolutionary eschatology is tinged with regret. Despite his fiery commitment to the Revolution, Galin is tormented by his unrequited love for the laundress Irina.

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[117] Ibid., p. 229.
[118] Ibid., pp. 137, 144, 124.
[119] Ibid., p. 174.

As the oppositions of the day pass through a prism of greater reflexion, ethical scrutiny and emotional reaction, one can regard the evening mode as a spiritual and intellectual correlative to the sensual, polyphonic aesthetic of the sun, described above. The elegiac consciousness governing Babel''s crepuscular meditations is thus subjective: a revelation of one person's response, as affected by his particular characteristics, influences and contradictions. Consequently, it does not pretend to represent a privileged or authoritative view; the 'flashes' of insight of which more than one scholar has written convey personal, psychological truths, rather than universal or absolute ones. This is also reflected by the fact that the (psychological, rather than mystical) concept of 'epiphany' has often been applied to *Red Cavalry*, while no commentator has read the cycle as a series of apocalyptic revelations.

Although personal epiphany and national vision are by no means mutually exclusive, Babel''s moments of revelation often undermine apocalyptic conceptions of the Revolution. By distilling narrative to the personal response of a man 'unfit for the business of destruction', it is inevitable that witnessing the cost of progress will lead to ethical doubts. Williams and Czesław Andruszko have both written about the fact that Babel''s evenings and 'подлунный мир' [sublunary world] are associated with diffidence, waning beauty and degeneration, in opposition to the vitality associated with the sun.[120] We have seen instances of this in the epiphanies cited above, with their pangs of and appeals to conscience, and declarations of sympathy. Therefore, if Babel''s revelatory structures and apocalyptic imagery place him in the context of an aesthetics of transformation and revelation, his application represents a step away from the tradition of depicting the Revolution as an apocalyptic intervention in history.

'Demythologized Apocalypse'?

Babel''s disinclination to employ the apocalypse as a meta-myth to rationalize the polyphony of historical chaos invites us to investigate how far Frank Kermode's descriptions of a modern 'sense of ending' apply to *Red Cavalry*. We have already considered the non-linear structure of the cycle as a whole and the revelations that embrace, rather than resolve, polarities. We have also found that there is little basis

[120] Czesław Andruszko, *Zhizneopisanie Babelia Isaaka Emmanuilovicha* (Poznań: Wydawn. Naukowe im. Adama Mickiewiza w Poznaniu, 1993), p. 40.

to argue that Babel' intends a literal representation of mythical timelessness, even though he draws on mystical discourse to produce a sort of transcendent effect. Yet can we go as far as to endorse Wolf Iro's view of his non-linearity as manifesting an anti-eschatological 'carnivalization' of the Russian End-narrative?[121]

Within the whirlwind of Revolutionary experience are fragments and reminders of past historical events. When Babel' creates a complex by juxtaposing past with present, the result not only reveals a nostalgic attitude to the old world under threat, but often actively subverts absolute claims for the Revolution. There are repeated indications that the territory over which the current war is being fought has frequently been the object of conflict and subjugation. The second sentence of *Red Cavalry* remarks that the highway leading them toward the front was 'построенное на мужичьих костях Николаем Первым' [built on peasants' bones by Nikolai I].[122]

The notion that historical crises are subject to repetition is close to the narrator's consciousness of past and continuing Jewish suffering. This is articulated with particular clarity in the epitaphs of 'The Cemetery at Kozin', which economically summarize the collective grief of successive generations, concluding in apostrophic pathos: '"О смерть, о корыстолюбец, о жадный вор, отчего ты не пожалел нас, хотя бы однажды?"' ["O death, O mercenary, O avaricious thief, why hast thou not even once taken pity on us?"].[123] At this point in the cycle, we are aware that death has yet to show pity on the local Jews, and that the ancient epitaph is in pertinent dialogue with the present.

'Berestechko', which appears four stories later, extends our consciousness of historical repetitions. The first paragraph pictures the Cossack army approaching the town. Among the diverse images presented is the above-quoted sentence picturing 'monstrous corpses scattered around thousand year-old burial mounds', another juxtaposition of past death and present slaughter. This is followed soon afterwards by Pavlichenko in his apocalyptically fluttering cloak: an angel of salvation or vengeance? The second paragraph hints at an answer. We follow the

[121] Wolf Iro, *Tertium non datur: Ideologie und Soziologie in Isaak Babels Konarmija* (Frankfurt am Main, New York: Peter Lang, 2001), p. 18.
[122] Babel', *Detstvo*, p. 101.
[123] Ibid., p. 158.

march past the tower of Bogdan Khmel'nitskii, the seventeenth-century Cossack leader under whom Jews were massacred. Someone emerges from behind a gravestone and sings of past Cossack glory. This amplifies the significance of the tower, because both the song and situation remind us of tomb of Rabbi Azriil, murdered by Khmel'nitskii's men, in 'The Cemetery at Kozin'. Although the *shtetl* 'stinks in anticipation of a new era' it greets the Red Cavalry with closed shutters, and this implied apprehension is justified by the image of a helpless elderly Jew being executed for espionage. These reverberations of a long-established relationship between Cossacks and Jews take on a broader significance at the end of the story. Liutov juxtaposes commissar Vinogradov's pronouncements about the liberating Revolution with the yellowed scrap of a letter he discovers: '"Berestetchko, 1820. Paul, mon bien aimé, on dit que l'empereur Napoléon est mort, est-ce vrai?"' ["Berestechko, 1820. Paul, my dear, they say that the Emperor Napoleon is dead. Is it true?"].[124] This artefact cautions the reader that an earlier, now faded, ideal has also marched across this land, expecting to liberate it once and for all and, no doubt, leaving behind its share of monstrous corpses.

Such juxtapositions – both in image-complexes and the larger, 'spatialized' units of stories – suggest that historical cataclysms are subject to recur, and thus cast doubt on the present aspirations for progress and resolution. The fact that this is a highly unsatisfactory vision, particularly for the Jews, who are persecuted above all others, perhaps explains Liutov's simultaneous attraction to the eschatological leap into something better, his desire to see the Cossacks as instruments of justice, and his awkward justification of the means to the end in conversation with Gedali.

Numerous allusions to the cyclical rhythms of nature reinforce the text's scepticism about linear or end-orientated schemes of time. From 'Crossing the Zbruch' onward the reader is bombarded with motifs of fertility, pregnancy, degeneration and death. In addition to the biological world, we have already discussed the plethora of astral imagery, which also belongs to a pattern of eternal recurrence. Robert Mann is among those who have stressed the Nietzschean-pagan element in Babel''s writing:

> The Judaic and Christian concepts of history as linear movement towards a final, cataclysmic Judgement or Salvation fall beneath the wheel of history as it was

[124] Ibid., pp. 169-70.

> conceived by the ancient Greeks – an unending, ineffable cosmic cycle of birth, death and regeneration.[125]

This view of a world in which the present is not sacrificed to a better future is of course consistent with the vital aesthetic described above: that of Babel' the neo-Futurist, Apollinairian, and sun-worshipper. However, just as the diurnal sensuality is counterbalanced by the nocturnal realm of the mind, we should be cautious of ascribing great consolation to nature's capacity for regeneration. As Falen (in his more balanced treatment of the pagan question in Babel') points out:

> If shorn of its mythoreligious qualities <...> a cyclical theory no longer offers escape from an endless chain of meaningless suffering, and one is forced back to a linear, historical view which requires a religious belief in immortality and paradise if one is to avoid the spectre of irredeemable injustice.[126]

The vitality of nature does not eclipse the reality of human and cultural annihilation in *Red Cavalry*. For example, the pregnancy of the woman in 'Crossing the Zbruch' does not diminish the horror of her father's murder (or her anguish), even if the reader intellectually identifies a cyclical counterpoint in his future grandson. Moreover, Babel''s dialectical structures illuminate vitality and suffering in direct causal relationships, such as in the instances where Cossack physicality expresses itself in Jewish death.

Another subversive, 'Kermodian' plurality in *Red Cavalry* is that of messianisms, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. The juxtaposition of Russian, Marxist, Jewish and Polish messianic points of view damages the absolute claims of any one of them. Beyond this, we have seen in numerous examples how Babel' couches subjective, individual responses and aspirations at a point of historical crisis in terms of quasi-religious experience, not least in his narrator's epiphanies. Universal dreams such as Gedali's, Il'ia's and that of the Revolution itself share a space with exclusive visions of historical resolution, such as that of the peasant in 'Zamost'e':

> – Бьют кого-то, – сказал я. – Кого это бьют?..
> – Поляк, тревожится, – ответил мне мужик, – поляк жидов режет...
> Мужик переложил ружье из правой руки в левую. Борода его свернулась совсем набок, он посмотрел на меня с любовью и сказал:
> – Длинные эти ночи в цепу, конца этим ночам нет. И вот приходит человеку

[125] Mann, p. 101.
[126] Falen, p. 173.

охота поговорить с другим человеком, а где его возьмешь, другого человека-то?..
Мужик заставил меня прикурить от его огонька.
– Жид всякому виноват, – сказал он, – и нашему и вашему. Их после войны самое малое количество останется. Сколько в свете жидов считается?
– Десяток миллионов, – ответил я и стал взнуздывать коня.
– Их двести тысяч останется, – вскричал мужик и тронул меня за руку, боясь, что я уйду.[127]
["They are killing someone," I said. "Whom are they killing?"
"The Pole, he is agitated," the peasant answered me, "the Pole is killing Yids..."
The peasant passed his rifle from his right hand into his left. His beard curled entirely to one side. He looked at me with love and said:
"These long nights, one after another, there's no end to these nights. And a man gets the urge to talk to another person, but where will you get that other person?..."
The peasant made me light up from his cigarette.
"The Yid is guilty before all men," he said, "both ours and yours. After the war only the smallest number of them will be left. How many Yids are there in the world?"
"Ten million," I answered, and began to bridle my horse.
"There'll be two hundred thousand of them left," he exclaimed and touched my arm, fearing that I would leave.]

There is a problematic bond between the narrator and interlocutor, with a tension between the peasant's brotherliness and his anti-Semitism (respectively, the ideal and the chauvinistic underbelly of Slavophile messianism). This is emphasized by his initial address of 'земляк' [fellow-countryman] and the ambiguous distinction 'both ours and yours'. The tension runs deeper than the implication that the peasant has guessed that Liutov is a Jew and perhaps even has an intuition of Liutov's troubled relationship to his Jewishness. However unpalatable his ideas, Liutov has found another visionary, who cannot be excluded from his collection of sincere dreamers. If he does not accept the equivalence of others' spiritual needs to his own, Liutov assumes the posture of oppressor, as illustrated by the numerous instances where his ethical indignation causes him to treat others unsympathetically, in turn exposing their own suffering or the rough circumstances that induce soldiers to persecute.[128]

This confrontation of different narratives of resolution represents a significant contrast to works such as *The Twelve* and *Whirlwind Russia*, which depict a chaotic cosmos that can be explained by a single, simplifying myth of time. Remizov was reluctant to accept the Revolution and, like Babel', holds together the polyphony of the times through the unifying consciousness of his historically insignificant artist-

[127] Babel', *Detstvo*, p. 210.
[128] Carden, *Art*, draws out this 'liberal dilemma' well.

narrator.[129] Yet because Remizov's Russo-centric polyphony draws upon a national messianic past, rather than a pluralistic messianic present, as a context for Revolutionary tribulations, it tends to affirm the apocalyptic paradigm. With *Red Cavalry*, Babel' arguably goes further than his contemporaries in exposing absolute conceptions of eschatological change to relativism.

Babel' writes about an 'immanent apocalypse' that has been created by a collaboration of history and cultural-historical discourse. We have seen how this perceived end-condition is represented by various messianic myths and the fragmentation of linear sequence. However, we can also conclude that *Red Cavalry* exhibits elements of the sophisticated, demythologized apocalyptic consciousness described (and advocated) by Kermode. Time is locked in a 'narrative middle', without beginning or end, and it resolves none of the work's overarching conflicts. Instead, the author portrays a complex, conflicting present that can only be encapsulated in the stasis of paradox. Babel''s perception of the tragic leitmotifs of history further indicates that his 'now' is a moment of crisis in attitudes to time in addition to – or perhaps instead of – being a turning point in social organization. If *Red Cavalry* expresses scepticism toward biblical, historicist, and indeed Marxist, goal-orientated schemes of time, then its emphasis on biological existence seems to support Kermode's claim that, as the present ceases to be defined according to a future *parousia*, Beginning and End become associated with birth and death.[130] One must therefore keep in mind the fact that his spatial revelations are descriptions of a fragmented world at the same time as being lyrical unifications of its fragments.

Aesthetic Implications

> – В страстном здании хасидизма вышиблены окна и двери, но оно бессмертно, как душа матери... С вытекшими глазницами хасидизм все еще стоит на перекрестке ветров истории.
> Так сказал Гедали и, помолившись в синагоге, он повел меня к рабби Моталэ, к последнему рабби из Чернобыльской династии.
> Мы поднялись с Гедали вверх по главной улице. Белые костелы блеснули вдали, как гречишные поля. Орудийное колесо простонало за углом. Две беременные хохлушки вышли из ворот, зазвенели монистами и сели на скамью. Робкая звезда зажглась в оранжевых боях заката, и покой, субботний покой, сел на

[129] On the role of Remizov's narrator see for example Slobin, especially p. 130.
[130] Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 25.

кривые крыши житомирского гетто.[131]
["In the passionate edifice of Hassidism the windows and doors have been knocked out, but it is immortal, like the soul of a mother... With gouged eye-sockets Hassidism still stands at the crossroads of the winds of history."
So said Gedali and, having prayed at the synagogue, he led me to Rabbi Motale, the last Rabbi of the Chernobyl dynasty.
Gedali and I ascended the main street. White Catholic churches shone in the distance like fields of buckwheat. Around the corner the wheel of a gun was moaning. Two pregnant Ukrainian women came out through the gates, jingled their necklaces and sat down on a bench. The shy star lit up in the orange battles of the sunset, and a repose, a Sabbath repose, settled on the crooked roofs of the Zhitomir ghetto.]

This passage from 'The Rabbi' sums up many of the features of *Red Cavalry* which have emerged in this chapter. The third paragraph in particular shows the narrator in the lyrical mode typical of his epiphanies and, in addition to this heightened aesthetic receptiveness, the evening's spiritual significance is amplified by the sacred time of the commencing Sabbath and Gedali's astounding image of Hassidism, assaulted and blinded, yet nevertheless messianically situated at the crossroads of history. The instantaneous, revelatory impact relies technically upon the narrator holding a number of disparate and clashing elements in his gaze.

Liutov's openness to each of them does not resolve anything in the external world. Along with the 'passionate edifice of Hassidism', the Revolution (the reason for Liutov's presence in Zhitomir, and to which the sound of the artillery wheeled around the corner alludes) and the Polish-Catholic messianism of the shining white churches form a plurality of incompatible messianic dogmas. The 'crossroads of the winds of history' and 'orange battles of the sunset' seem to endow the present conflict with eschatological significance. However, the two pregnant women, equally defined by a state of expectation, remind us of the continuing cycle of natural time, oblivious to apocalyptic resolution. The simile comparing white churches to fields of buckwheat is in this sense curious, especially given the lack of visual resemblance, because it binds the spiritual and end-orientated with the earthly and cyclical in a single image. Finally, there is the disjunction between the clashing content and the passivity of narratorial stance. We might say that Liutov reduces the conflicting interests and ideas to a lyrical landscape or, conversely, that these inescapable oppositions are projected onto what is outwardly a harmonic scene. Thus do Babel''s revelations carry the dual sensation of transcendence and impasse.

[131] Babel', *Detstvo*, p. 133.

This chapter has found that in *Red Cavalry* aspects of transcendental and apocalyptic paradigms characteristic of pre-Revolutionary modernism coexist with a level of scepticism and relativism atypical of Symbolist-inspired responses to the Revolution as Apocalypse. We can thus speak of a combination of aspects described by Joseph Frank and Frank Kermode: non-linear form as both spatial unification and descriptive fragmentation. The breakdown of hierarchies implicit in Babel''s pluralistic forms reflects his rejection of the absolute claims of religious and historical missions. However, his continuing interest in the myths of the old world and 'that which was perhaps bad, but smelt to me of poetry' suggest a desire to salvage as much as possible of the old, meaningful, (aesthetically-rooted) spiritual experience for the new era. In this sense, the god-building conceptions of the Revolution as a new religion seem to be relevant contexts to *Red Cavalry*. Babel' borrows the imagery and dynamics of religious revelation, yet roots revelations in human feelings as a basis for his ethics and aesthetics. It is an emotional resonance that bestows authority on his epiphanies, a deepening capacity for sympathy which leads to both moral reassessment and heightened aesthetical receptiveness. If Symbolism envisages poetry as a means to access a higher realm, Babel' adapts the aesthetic-apocalyptic project to transform our view of this world.

Therefore, the aspect of his writing that we may label 'spatial' or 'cubist' proves to exhibit the classic duality of modernist fragmentation discussed in the introductory chapter. On one hand, it expresses the multiplied and fragmented reality perceived by Babel' in his 'Odessan' cosmopolitanism and alienation. The cessations of narrative time rely on re-emphasizing the narrator's situation outside the polarities of the story. On the other hand, when an all-accepting attitude is applied to this fragmentation, it is transformed into a unified whole within the subjective mind of the artist. As a result we perceive a revelatory 'flash' of instantaneous association that does not depict the mystical qualities of Revolutionary time, but rather a democratic affirmation of variety.

Far beyond his engagement with the general cultural experience – using the eschatological analogy as way of speaking of hopes for the coming epoch, as well as of the enormity and sublimity of the crisis – the most significant aspect of Babel''s subversive apocalypticism is this adaptation of religious revelation. His

'transvaluation' differs from Futurist demolitions of aesthetical and ethical hierarchies insofar as it emphasizes a humane dimension, which we should perhaps associate above all with his Jewishness. The apocalyptic union of sacred and profane, or aesthetic attitude with grubby reality, reveals the beauty and therefore value in all things. The margins between ethical and aesthetic sympathy cannot be clearly drawn, because Babel' constantly reminds the reader that an aesthetic experience is a human emotion.[132] As we have seen, *Red Cavalry* treats protagonists as artists, and their acts as artistic creation. Afon'ka, the *skaz* secondary narrators, D'iakov's theatricality, the ventriloquist Konkin, and Sashka's songs confirm Efraim Sicher's statement that 'many of Babel''s characters must perform an artistic act to resolve their plot function.'[133] It is the role of the Artist Liutov to recognize the 'artist', and therefore the humanity, in others. He thereby gives 'that which is perhaps bad' and 'that which is off to the side' their due value, and transcends his narrator's and reader's urge for simplifying judgements and resolutions. The movements ('monkey-fashion, like Japanese at the circus') of the Jews in 'Crossing the Zbruch' initially appear grotesque, but prove as significant and pathetic as those of Nō tragedy.

We might thus conclude that when Babel' describes Liutov's response to the artistic credo of Pan Apolek, he is also speaking of the intended effect of his own epiphanies upon the reader:

> Я дал тогда обет следовать примеру пана Аполека. И сладость мечтательной злобы, горькое презрение к псам и свиньям человечества, огонь молчаливого и упоительного мщения – я принес их в жертву новому обету.[134]
> [I took a vow to follow the example of Pan Apolek. And the sweetness of dreamy spite, bitter contempt toward the dogs and pigs of mankind, the fire of taciturn and intoxicating revenge – I brought these in sacrifice to my new vow.]

Babel''s narratorial position outside and between conflicting parties enables him to pursue the goal of art as conciliation: an appeal for clemency on Judgement Day.

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[132] Esaulov is useful in exploring the way in which the aesthetic informs ethical instincts in Babel'.
[133] Efraim Sicher, 'Art as Metaphor. Epiphany and Aesthetic Statement: The Short Stories of Isaak Babel'', *Modern Language Review*, 77.2 (1982), 387-96 (p. 394).
[134] Babel', *Detstvo*, p. 113.

Chapter Four – Beyond the End: Platonov's *Chevengur*

> Русские – бегуны и разбойники. И русские – странники, ищущие Божьей правды. <...> Путь земной представлялся русскому народу путем бегства и страничества. Россия всегда была полна мистико-пророческих сект. И в них всегда была жажда преображения жизни.[1]
> [The Russians are *beguny* and brigands.[2] And the Russians are wanderers, seeking God's truth. <...> The Russian people imagined the earthly path as a path of flight and wandering. Russia was always full of mystical-prophetic sects. And in them there was always a thirst for the transformation of life.]

During the years that Babel' was occupied with his *Red Cavalry* stories, the slightly younger Andrei Platonov (born in 1899, Babel' in 1894) was a more wholehearted and optimistic supporter of the Revolution. His youthful idealism was channelled both into involvement as an engineer in irrigation and electrification projects, and into his first literary output, aligned to the utopian *Proletkul't* movement. His poetry of the immediate post-Revolutionary period reveals a much more ecstatic and naïvely literal response to eschatologically-shaped hopes for the new society than we have seen in Babel''s work. The following lines were written in 1920:

> В поле закопали люди свое сердце –
> Может, рожь поспеет тут и без дождя,
> Может, булет лето, и воскреснут дети.[3]
> [In the fields people have buried their hearts –
> Maybe the rye will ripen even without rain,
> Maybe summer will come and children will rise from the dead.]
>
> Город улетающий в сверкающем железе –
> Небо прорывающий таран.
> Мы проломим двери в голубом навесе
> К пролетариям планетных стран.[4]
> [The flying city in glittering iron –
> A battering ram breaking through the sky
> We'll smash a doorway through the blue canopy
> To the proletarians of planetary lands.]

Platonov's apocalyptic and utopian language in the verse of this period evinces a deep involvement in discourse envisaging the Revolution as an event of universal significance: 'конный вихрь' [horse-whirlwind], 'ураган труда' [hurricane of

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[1] Nikolai Berdiaev, 'Russkaia ideia', in his *Samopoznanie*, ed. by M.A. Bliumenkrants (Moscow: Eksmo-Press, 2001), pp. 11-247 (p. 17).
[2] The *beguny* [runners] were a religious sect, formed at around the end of the eighteenth century.
[3] Andrei Platonov, *Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh*, ed. by V. Chalmaev (Moscow: Informpechat', 1998), I, 55.
[4] Ibid., I, 34.

labour], 'бесконечность меряет великий машинист' [the great machinist measures infinity].[5]

Platonov's novel *Chevengur* (written between 1926 and 1929) is partly set, like *Red Cavalry*, during the Civil War, though it covers a larger span of Russia's revolutionary period, from before the First World War to NEP. Its depiction of Revolutionary experience continues to register a salient messianic and utopian context. Indeed, of the three works selected for case studies, Platonov's is unquestionably the most directly engaged in the apocalyptic tradition. However, this is not necessarily to claim that *Chevengur* is closer to the assumptions of Russian or Revolutionary messianism than *Red Cavalry* or *Before Sunrise*. It dates from after the Revolution's heroic phase of struggle and victory, granting the author the opportunity to experience the disjunction of the idealistic aspirations expressed in his youthful verse with Soviet reality. The passing years also afforded the maturing Platonov time to reassess those early 1920s ideas in themselves. *Chevengur* – along with *Kotlovan* [*The Foundation Pit*] (written almost concurrently) – represents a more ambivalent Platonov, as well as one who has thoroughly investigated the existential implications of the utopian line of thought. The interval between the Revolution and *Chevengur* thus has an impact upon the novel: its perspective is perceptibly more post-apocalyptic than that of *Red Cavalry*.

This chapter will examine the ways in which Platonov's modernist form elaborates his idea of the End, and how his fragmentation and polyphony relate to the 'spatializing' and 'deconstructive' possibilities of modernist apocalypticism associated with the theories of Joseph Frank and Frank Kermode. *Chevengur* is particularly responsive to such questions because of the crucial role that language and textual structure play in its exploration of end-time. For Platonov, the End is a narratological and linguistic problem as well as a philosophical one. Joseph Brodsky was one of the first to articulate this in his well-known essay 'Catastrophes in the Air':

> the idea of paradise is the logical end of human thought in the sense that it, that thought, goes no further; for beyond paradise there is nothing else, nothing else happens. It can safely be said, therefore, that paradise is a dead end. <...>

[5] Ibid., I, 43, 38, 34.

> The first casualty of any discourse about utopia – desired or already attained – is grammar; for language [is] unable to keep up with this sort of thought.[6]

End-Orientation

Platonov, unlike Babel' and Zoshchenko, has received a great deal of scholarly attention regarding the eschatological and utopian aspects of his work. This is unsurprising, as Russian apocalypticism and philosophy of time are more salient in his writing. Since the re-emergence of Platonov's suppressed work, numerous commentaries have approached his apocalypticism head-on, and every treatment of *Chevengur* as a whole, from Mikhail Geller's *Andrei Platonov v poiskakh schast'ia* [*Andrei Platonov in Search of Happiness*] and Brodsky's essay onward, has dealt with its eschatological context. David Bethea's *The Shape of Apocalypse in Modern Russian Fiction* devotes a chapter to *Chevengur*.

Platonov draws upon a probably even broader variety of eschatological, and certainly utopian, material than Babel'. Commentaries have revealed affinities between the Chevengur commune and medieval chiliasts and Campanella's *City of the Sun*, the influence upon the novel of Russian peasant utopian myths and quasi-socialist sectarian communities, as well as its dialogue with the national literary messianic discourse.[7] The centrality of a belief in the end of time or the desire to bring it about in governing the thought and actions of characters also distinguishes *Chevengur* from *Red Cavalry*.

Perceptions of an imminent end or an apocalypse in progress thus colour protagonists' experience of time during Revolutionary upheaval. This is reflected in the incorporation of apocalyptic imagery. As in *Red Cavalry*, the Johannine motif of the falling star occurs on several occasions:

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[6] Joseph Brodsky, 'Catastrophes in the Air', in his *Less Than One: Selected Essays* (London: Penguin, 1987), pp. 268-303 (p. 286).

[7] On references to folkloric and European utopianism see Mikhail Geller, *Andrei Platonov v poiskakh schast'ia* (Paris: YMCA, 1982), chapter 3. On similarities between Chevengur and post-Revolutionary sects see Aleksandr Evdokimov, 'Sektantstvo i "Chevengur"', in *'Strana filosofov' Andreia Platonova: Problemy tvorchestva*, vol 4, ed. by N.V. Kornienko (Moscow: Imli Ran / Nasledie, 2000), pp. 542-47. On Russian literary sources see, for example, V.P. Kriuchkov, '"Vperedi – Isus Khristos": "Dvenadtat'" A. Bloka i "Chevengur" A. Platonova', in *Russkaia literaturnaia klassika XX veka: V. Nabokov, A.Platonov, L. Leonov*, ed. by A.I. Vaniukov et al. (Saratov Pedagogical Institute, 2000), pp. 88-100; Valerii Maroshi, 'Razmyshleniia Platonova o poeme Pushkina "Mednyi vsadnik" v romane "Chevengur"', in *'Strana filosofov' Andreia Platonova: Problemy tvorchestva*, vol 5, ed. by N.V. Kornienko (Moscow: Imli Ran, 2003), pp. 507-13.

> Дальние собаки лаяли страшно и гулко, а с неба изредка падали усталые звезды. Может быть, в самой гуще ночи, среди прохладного ровного поля шли сейчас куда-нибудь странники, и в них тоже, как и в Саше, тишина и погибающие звезды превращались в настроение личной жизни.[8]
> [Distant dogs barked fearfully and resonantly, and now and then tired stars fell from the sky. Perhaps now, in the very heart of the night, in the cool, even field, some pilgrims were walking somewhere; and in them, as in Sasha, the silence and the dying stars turned into the mood of inner life.]
>
> Она глядела на небо из окна школы и видела звезды над тишиной ночи. Там было такое безмолвие, что в степи, казалось, находилась одна пустота и не хватало воздуха для дыхания; поэтому падали звезды вниз.[9]
> [She gazed at the sky from the school window and saw the stars above the quiet of the night. Out there was such silence that in the steppe, it seemed, was nothing but emptiness and there wasn't enough air to breathe. That was why stars fell down.]

Bethea, among others, has discussed the projection of the temporal dynamics of eschatology and utopia onto space and his use of the recurrent 'space-time symbols of [Russian] apocalyptic fiction (horse, train, road, etc.)'.[10] Platonov's heroes Sasha Dvanov and Kopenkin ride the locomotive and particularly the horse with a degree of consciousness toward the end of time.

The apocalyptic context becomes increasingly explicit as the narrative reaches the no-place at the end of the road, lost in the steppe. The town of Chevengur is the setting for most of the last third of the novel, and it is in this utopia that the advent of communism, the end of history and the end of time itself are proclaimed – principally by the nominal leader Chepurnyi 'the Japanese' (whose Mongol features might be read as a nod toward the Scythian discourse). This part of the novel, in which the Chevengurians seek to understand the timelessness they have achieved and how to live in it, is bracketed by two apocalyptic narrative episodes: a parodic Second Coming and a parodic Armageddon, which terminates the utopian experiment.

Although the aspects described above link Platonov to the Russian messianic tradition, his approach to the discourse – and particularly the Symbolist-Futurist branch – is distinct among modernists so far discussed. Whereas Babel' was born into a cosmopolitan milieu and formed under the constellation of a modernisms promising to redraw the world, Platonov grew up among workers and peasants in

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[8] Platonov, II, 39.
[9] Ibid., II, 72-73.
[10] David Bethea, *The Shape of Apocalypse in Modern Russian Fiction* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 162.

Iamskaia Sloboda, on the outskirts of Voronezh, a situation rife with material poverty. In this situation political and technological revolutions represented more plausible means of leaping into the future than the transformative vision of the poet. It is therefore natural enough that Platonov became an engineer after the Revolution, and that he gravitated toward the *Proletkul't* movement at the beginning of his literary career, and not toward groups stressing the value of the aesthetic. It is also consistent with this background that he came under the (extensively explored) influence of the thought of Nikolai Fedorov (and not that of Vladimir Solov'ev!).[11] Fedorov's *Filosofiia obshchego dela* [*Philosophy of the Common Cause*], first published posthumously in 1906, was a rather idiosyncratic contribution to the Russian eschatological canon, setting out a practical plan of social organization and technological innovation to rebuild paradise on earth and achieve physical resurrection of the dead without the need for a Last Judgement from outside history.[12]

Platonov shares with Fedorov an approach to accomplishing utopian ends that is materialistic and practical, while the motivation of both is existential. Almost every character in *Chevengur* is portrayed as being deeply involved in and spurred forward by a groping understanding of his state of existence. If, as it occurs to Sasha Dvanov, 'есть, примерно, десять процентов чудаков в народе, которые на любое дело пойдут – и в революцию, и в скит на богомолье' [around ten percent of the population are eccentrics, ready to follow any cause, both the Revolution and a pilgrimage to a secluded monastery], then it is this eccentric tenth of Russia that chiefly populates Platonov's work.[13] *Chevengur* brims with pilgrims, holy fools and wanderers (bringing to mind the portraits of apocalyptic, Revolutionary Russia by Pil'niak, to whom the author was close in the late 1920s).[14] They respond to apparently disparate inner calls with a common

[11] See Ayleen Teskey, *Platonov and Fyodorov: The Influence of Christian Philosophy on a Soviet Writer* (Amersham: Avebury, 1982), and Svetlana Semenova, *Nikolai Fedorov: tvorchestvo zhizni* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel', 1990), pp. 363-73.
[12] Nikolai Fedorov, *Filosofiia obshchego dela*, 2 vols (Moscow: AST), 2003.
[13] Platonov, II, 119.
[14] The two authors knew each other well at the time (collaborating on 'Che che o' and the play *Duraki na periferii* [*Fools on the Periphery*] in 1928) and it seems likely that the Revolutionary romanticism of early Pil'niak (particularly *The Naked Year*) influenced *Chevengur*. We should also note that holy fool imagery features in Pil'niak's 'Krasnoe derevo' ['Mahogany'] of 1929.

millenarian restlessness, whether to resurrect the dead, seek the end of history, or perpetually rove about the steppe. The provincial party boss Shumilin reflects:

> Люди в несчастии стараются двигаться. Русские странники и богомольцы потому и брели постоянно, что они рассеивали на своем ходу тяжесть горюющей души народа.[15]
> [People in unhappy times seek to move. That was why Russian wanderers and pilgrims continually drifted, because on their path they scattered the weight of the grieving soul of the people.]

There are similarities between the way in which Platonov roots eschatological ideas in the needs of ordinary people and Babel''s awareness of the subjectivism of messianic feeling. However, where Babel''s priority is perhaps to affirm the emotional significance of those needs, Platonov interacts with his fools much more on their own terms and takes a greater interest in the philosophical basis of their motivation. Although most of his protagonists are illiterate and eccentric, the experiential correspondences that emerge from their wanderings toward varying and vague existential goals set the philosophical parameters of the novel.

From *Chevengur*'s chorus of semi-articulated ideas and feelings, scholars such as Geller, Elena Tolstaia-Segal and Thomas Seifrid have done a great deal to map Platonov's elaborate conceptual formulations, which involve his ethical, ontological, and even mathematical thought.[16] Out of the polyphony of *duraki* emerge 'modern' questions about time and existence which relate both to the starting premises of this thesis and to the existential problems defined by Fedorov. The recurring motifs of famine, man's need for shelter and warmth, and the tragic separation caused by death relate *Chevengur* to the Fedorovian tenet that nature is hostile and alien to human life.[17] Fedorov's conclusion – that blind nature must therefore be 'made conscious' in order to support, rather than threaten and shorten, man's existence – is an aspiration shared by the Chevengurians, who expect that the

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[15] Platonov, II, 60.
[16] Elena Tolstaia-Segal, '"Stikhiinye sily": Platonov i Pil'niak (1928-1929)', *Slavica Hierosolymitana*, 3 (1978), 89-109; Elena Tolstaia-Segal, 'Ideologicheskie konteksty Platonova', *Russian Literature*, 9 (1981), 231-80; Thomas Seifrid, *Andrei Platonov: Uncertainties of Spirit* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). On the author's interest in the mathematical problems of space and time, see E.G. Mushchenko, 'Khudozhestvennoe vremya v romane A. Platonova "Chevengur"', in *Andrei Platonov: Issledovaniia i materialy*, ed. by T.A. Nikonova (Voronezh: Voronezh State University, 1993), pp. 28-38.
[17] Semenova, pp. 149-52, summarizes Fedorov's analysis of the problem of humanity's existence as part of nature.

sun will labour on behalf of the liberated proletariat once communism is achieved.[18] Chepurnyi claims: 'У нас в Чевенгуре хорошо – мы мобилизовали солнце на вечную работу <...>!' [It's good here in our Chevengur – we've mobilized the sun for eternal labour <...>!][19] The struggle to reach the End in *Chevengur* is thus a conflict with the impermanence wrought by nature: it is an eschatological assault upon cyclical time.

Registering the paradox that nature encompasses death yet continues unabated, the work probes the place of human experience of time – where life is ephemeral, though history provides a linear continuum – amid this eternal cycle of the natural world. Zakhar Pavlovich provides some of the first definitions of this view. He meditates on the hermit's death, which has not harmed nature [так и умер, ни в чем не повредив природы].[20] He notices nature's 'бессмысленное происшествие' [senseless happening] as reflected in the famine-wrought landscape. It is abandoned by people, yet nature is flourishing and lizards are procreating in the dried well.[21] Later he becomes aware of nature's indifference to mankind and the misfortune inherent in the incompatibility of cyclical time with our needs:

> Тихая, равнодушная жизнь – речные потоки, рост трав, смена времен года. Захар Павлович полагал, что эти равномерные силы всю землю держат в оцепенении – <...> ничего не изменяется к лучшему – какими были деревни и люди, такими и останутся. Ради сохранения равносильности в природе, беда для человека всегда повторяется. Был четыре года назад неурожай – мужики из деревни вышли в отход, а дети легли в ранние могилы, – но эта судьба не прошла навеки, а снова теперь возвратилась ради точности хода всеобщей жизни.[22]
>
> [A quiet, indifferent life: river currents, the growth of grass, the changing of the seasons. Zakhar Pavlovich supposed that these even forces hold the whole world in torpor: <...> nothing changes for the better: they way villages and people were, so they'll stay. For the sake of maintaining balance in nature, human calamity always repeats itself. Four years ago the harvest failed. The men-folk left the village and the children lay down in early graves. But that fate did not pass forever, and had now returned again for the sake of the sure motion of universal life.]

The cyclical pattern of time is semi-consciously glimpsed by various characters on occasions, and usually gives rise to existential anguish. For example, 'Саша

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[18] See ibid., pp. 177-97, on Fedorov's plans for regulating nature.
[19] Platonov, II, 154. This also calls to mind the rhetoric of the avant-garde, for instance *Victory over the Sun* and Maiakovskii's poetic addresses to the sun.
[20] Ibid., II, 8.
[21] Ibid., II, 11.
[22] Ibid., II, 31.

монотонно чувствовал, как движется солнце, проходят времена года и круглые сутки бегут поезда.' [Sasha felt monotonously how the sun moved, the seasons passed and around the clock the trains ran.][23]

Another feature of the cyclical pattern is mortality and the consequent severing of human relationships. This is expressed in the recurring themes of orphanhood (echoing Fedorov's concept of 'безотцовщина' [fatherlessness]) and yearning for deceased parents and children.[24] Death is the crux of the tragic repetitiveness of natural time, which the humans in *Chevengur* desire to overcome through history. Such a hope is expressed many times in the novel. The inscription on an ancient cross reads: 'Спи с миром, любимая дочь, до встречи младенцев с родителями.' [Sleep in peace, beloved daughter, until the meeting of infants and parents.][25] Many protagonists, including the hero Sasha Dvanov, are (often unconsciously) motivated to reach the End by a desire for reunion with a deceased parent, and, to varying degrees of naïveté, several characters hold the Fedorovian belief that the goal of history is the physical resurrection of the dead. Kopenkin believes that 'от дружеских сил человечества оживет и станет живою гражданкой Роза Люксембург' [from humanity's force of friendship Rosa Luxemburg will revive and come to life].[26]

Thus for the protagonists of *Chevengur* the history-terminating Revolution is an existential idea rather than a political one: it is invested with hopes of mastering nature, time and death. Sasha:

> верил, что революция – это конец света. В будущем же мире мгновенно уничтожится тревога Захара Павловича, а отец-рыбак найдет то, ради чего он своевольно утонул.[27]
> [believed that revolution was the end of the world. In the future world [his foster father] Zakhar Pavlovich's anxiety would be destroyed in an instant, and Sasha's fisherman father would find that for which he had wilfully drowned.]

This theme is echoed in Sasha's dream, when his father urges him, 'Делай что-нибудь в Чевенгуре: зачем же мы будем мертвыми лежать...' [Do something in Chevengur: what's the point of us lying here dead?].[28] Later still, he guesses

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[23] Ibid., II, 38.
[24] See Teskey, pp. 92-109, 140. We recall that the motif of resurrection also occurred in Platonov's earlier verse, quoted above.
[25] Platonov, II, p. 32.
[26] Ibid., II, 114.
[27] Ibid., II, 47.

> почему Чепурный и большевики-чевенгурцы так желают коммунизма: он есть конец истории, конец времени, время же идет только в природе, а в человеке стоит тоска.[29]
> [why Chepurnyi and the Bolsheviks-Chevengurians so desire communism: it is the end of history, the end of time; for time flows only in nature, whereas in man boredom stands still.]

Although Platonov's existential problems are derived from Fedorov's, a crucial difference between the two resides in the absence of a God in the scheme of *Chevengur*. The philosopher's foundation of religious faith justifies his optimism. For Fedorov, man's fundamental predicament of mortality is our mission to overcome by means of cooperation and technology – with an insurance note from God if we fail; for Platonov and a world which has rejected religion, death is a more substantial problem. (This is perhaps echoed in the general mood of grieving loneliness among *Chevengur*'s eccentrics, as they pursue the 'common cause' along divergent paths.) Indeed, it is much more difficult to conceive of an absolute end of time without a divine agent. The novel's attitude to the Fedorovian End and resolution of the conflict between linear-historical and cyclical-natural time is ambivalently modern.

The sense of alienation from nature that stimulates desires for utopian or eschatological transcendence of time in *Chevengur* recalls the conditions under which, according to Wilhelm Worringer, abstract art arose. Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy* and Frank's spatial theory, inspired by the former, argue that when nature is no longer equated with divine creation, its representation no longer satisfies man's spiritual needs. (One notes that Platonov's landscapes, steppe, and nature in the abstract are again and again described as empty [пустой].) Consequently, art eschews the referential framework, and literature attempts to overcome the time element involved in its structure.[30] On a narrative level, *Chevengur* fits the paradigm elegantly: the apocalypse myth, conflated with the Revolutionary utopianism, expresses an existential yearning for timelessness. (Indeed, the Fedorovian common cause and Russian-messianic myths at the root of Platonov's thought aspire more explicitly to timelessness than the Western writers with whom Frank illustrates his theory.) This leads us back to the question of

[28] Ibid., II, 181.
[29] Ibid., II, 252.
[30] Joseph Frank, 'Spatial Form in Modern Literature', in his *The Widening Gyre* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1963), pp. 3-62 (pp. 55-57).

whether the fragmented form of *Chevengur* constructs a timeless, spatial structure equivalent to the utopian End sought by its protagonists.

Spatialization and Timelessness

If for Babel' existential issues tend to arise from the historical situation in which characters find themselves, then in Platonov there is a greater sense that philosophical questions have primacy, and even that the existential restlessness of his protagonists directs history and constructs the Revolution (certainly at least the microcosmic fictional revolution). Indeed, the philosophical and narrative quest to overcome time has a powerful influence on most aspects of *Chevengur*, including stylistic and structural ones. As a result, representations or perceptions (often hard to distinguish) of time as an abstract idea are more directly bound up in form than in *Red Cavalry*, where cyclical and messianic conceptions and their manifestations in form relate principally to history and culture. In this respect Platonov is closer to the Belyi we have explored in the *Second Symphony* than to Babel'.

Several scholars have pointed out ways in which the linguistic and structural unorthodoxies of *Chevengur* reflect its themes of time and the timelessness of the End. E.V. Rudakovskaia notes the 'взаимозависимость грамматики и идеологии текста' [interdependence of the grammar and ideology of the text] and finds that the linguistic organization and narrative organization of the novel are isomorphically linked. [31] Together with M.A. Dmitrovskaia, Rudakovskaia has revealed ways in which Platonov's manipulation of language intervenes specifically in the reader's sense of time.[32] Dmitrovskaia describes a timeless effect caused by Platonov's 'разрушение и переструктурирование глагола (сказуемого) как носителя категории времени' [destruction and restructuring of the verb (or predicate) as carrier of the time category].[33]

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[31] E.V. Rudakovskaia, 'Vremia grammaticheskoe i vremia khudozhestvennoe v romane A. Platonova "Chevengur"', in *Tvorchestvo Andreia Platonova: Issledovaniia i materialy*, vol 2, ed. by Valerii V'iugin (St Petersburg: Nauka, 2000), pp. 78-88 (p. 79).

[32] M.A. Dmitrovskaia, 'Kategorii vremeni i vechnosti v tvorchestve A. Platonova', *V-aia vsesoiuznaia shkola molodykh vostokovedov: Tezisy* (Moscow: Nauka, 1989), 76-79; and, to a lesser extent, M.A. Dmitrovskaia, *Kategoriia prostranstva u A. Platonova v lingvisticheskom i kul'turologicheskom osveshchenii* (Kaliningrad: Kaliningrad State University Press, 2002).

[33] Dmitrovskaia, 'Kategorii vremeni', p. 77.

Other studies have examined the relationship between the novel's textual fragmentation and its temporal thematics, which is the specific concern of this thesis. Hallie White demonstrates how Platonov's manipulation of sequence fundamentally affects his evocation of time.[34] In the first part of the novel – up to the arrival at Chevengur – this can be observed in relation to 'picaresque' structure, whose episodic nature, White remarks, 'does not admit the kind of linear development that would give a cumulative, nonreversible development of events.'[35]

In this context, we can draw a direct connection between form and the striving for timelessness in the wandering of pilgrims about the pages of the novel. All *Chevengur*'s pilgrims share a primary concern with their idea, rather than the direction it will lead them in:

> Послушник поднялся и пошел в свою сторону, про которую и сам точно не знал – где она находится.
> Проша это сразу почуял и сказал вслед послушнику:
> – Пошел. А куда пошел – сам не знает. Поверни его, он назад пойдет: вот черти-нахлебники![36]
> [The monastery novice rose and set off toward his destination, not precisely knowing where it lay.
> Prosha immediately sensed this and said after the novice:
> "He's gone. And where he's gone, he doesn't know himself. Turn him around, and he'll come back, the devil-parasites!"]

An identical thought emerges from Shumilin's encounter with a group of wanderers:

> – Вы куда? – спросил этих бредущих Шумилин.
> – Мы-то? – произнес один старик, начавший от безнадежности жизни уменьшаться в росте. – Мы куда попало идем, где нас окоротят. Поверни нас, мы назад пойдем.[37]
> ["Where are you going?" Shumilin asked the wanderers.
> "We?" said one old man, beginning to shrink due to the hopelessness of life. "We're going anywhere they'll crop us down. Turn us round, and we'll go back."]

Sasha's brief acquaintance who calls himself 'God' exits the novel in a similar manner:

> Бог уходил, не выбирая дороги, – без шапки, в одном пиджаке и босой; пищей его была глина, а надеждой – мечта.[38]

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[34] Hallie A. White, 'Time out of Line: Sequence and Plot in Platonov's *Chevengur*', *Slavic and East European Journal*, 42.1 (1981), 102-17.
[35] Ibid., p. 106. Hereafter 'picaresque' is used in White's sense (p. 102) to refer to episodic structure.
[36] Platonov, II, p. 34.
[37] Ibid., II, 60.
[38] Ibid., II, 65.

> [God walked off, not choosing his road, hatless, barefoot and only wearing a jacket; clay was his food, and his dream was hope.]

Another character, 'пешеход' [the pedestrian] Lui – a kind of literalization of the *beguny* sectarians – loves all roads with equal indiscrimination.

Among the more developed characters, Kopenkin believes that whatever road he follows leads toward Rosa Luxemburg's grave and resurrection. The obviously quixotic aspect of his character dovetails appropriately with the picaresque structure in which his and Sasha Dvanov's series of adventures are narrated. Dvanov himself also journeys through life in a kind of search for truth (and reunion with his drowned father) but wanders from episode to episode without insight into his direction.

The first part of *Chevengur* thus features a plurality of characters more or less blindly pursuing existential aspirations in various directions. Because this is conveyed without a great deal of narrative interference, the structure of the text shares the protagonists' seemingly arbitrary dynamics. Therefore, Elena Tolstaia-Segal's view that 'the traditional hero of *pochvennik* literature – the holy fool – rises from the level of theme to become the means for speaking about the world' can be seen to encompass the structure of *Chevengur* as much as its linguistic eccentricities.[39] Following his *duraki*, the narrator himself traces the convoluted line of a blind pilgrimage, and the 'indifference to direction' refrain is consequently replicated in the aimlessness of narrative sequences.

The notion that *Chevengur* is driven both thematically and structurally by this dynamo of *iurodstvo*, concerned with overcoming time, raises the question of how far the text shares, and indeed how far it realizes, its protagonists' striving toward timelessness: to what extent is Platonov's fragmented picaresque 'spatial'?

Shumilin's above-quoted thought that 'people in unhappy times seek to move, which was why Russian wanderers and pilgrims continually drifted, because on their path they scattered the weight of the grieving soul' offers a revealing image of the world in Platonov's novel. The protagonists live during a crisis of time, which impels them to embrace space over temporality. Space offers refuge from the

[39] Tolstaia-Segal, 'Stikhiinye sily', p. 106.

upheavals of change (occurring in time); this it has in common with religious conceptions of eternity and religious or utopian concepts of the End. Since the narrative of an eccentric willing to go in any direction lacks linear development, space registers a greater presence upon it than time, the unit of gradual change. Therefore, the arbitrary structure of *Chevengur*, literally covering a great deal of space, might be regarded as spatial in Frank's sense. Moreover, given that the cessation of consequential development is inherent to the striven-for End itself, this 'spatiality' and its thematic impetus are mutually complementary.

The fact that Platonov's novel is polyphonic as well as episodic draws it closer still to the spatial paradigm. As an example we can take the 'approach' representing the reader's first acquaintance with Chevengur.[40] Kopenkin decides to accompany Chepurnyi to the town:

> – Тогда едем в твой край! – сказал Копенкин. – Поглядим на факты!
> – Едем, – согласился Чепурный. – Соскучился я по своей Клабздюше![41]
> ["Then we'll ride to your parts!" said Kopenkin. "We'll take a look at the facts!"
> "Let's go," agreed Chepurnyi. "I've missed my Klabzdiusha!"]

Platonov cuts from this dialogue to a landscape five versts from Chevengur. One presumes that this indicates Kopenkin's and Chepurnyi's location (perhaps having expurgated intervening time, given the modesty of the distance of five versts in comparison to that suggested by Kopenkin's word 'край'). This expectation is frustrated by the introduction of a new character Firs, and a digression about his hermitic life and love of water. The sense that we might be spatially still with Kopenkin and Chepurnyi is then confounded by another leap:

> Немного дальше Фирса, среди затихшей равнины, в утренней пронзительной чистоте был виден малый город. От едкой свежести воздуха и противостояния солнца у пожилого человека смотревшего на тот город, слезились добрые глаза <...>[42]
> [A little further on from Firs, on the faded plain, in the piercing morning purity, a small town was visible. From the pungent freshness of the air and facing sun streamed the kindly eyes, looking at that town, of an aging man <...>]

Thus the text performs another twist, introducing Aleksei Alekseevich, while progressing spatially ('a little further on') toward Chevengur. It is revealed that Aleksei Alekseevich is yet another religious-socialist pilgrim, coming to Chevengur

[40] Platonov, II: 147-53.
[41] Ibid., II, 147.
[42] Ibid., II, 148.

to seek 'cooperation'. The narrative enters the town through his eyes, but quickly conflates his viewpoint with a broader one, and the present with the past. A lyrical description of Chevengur digresses into a portrait of the 'old Chevengurians', dominated by their expectation of the Second Coming. (It only later emerges that by these people were exterminated in a purge chronologically prior to Aleksei Alekseevich's arrival.) After this, we return to Aleksei Alekseevich in the present. We learn that he was in Chevengur before, when Chepurnyi first came to the town. The narrative switches to that earlier period; that previous encounter with an arriving Chepurnyi is then juxtaposed with the 'present' sighting of two horsemen, one of whom turns out to be Chepurnyi. It is not immediately disclosed that the other is Kopenkin, and therefore neither is the fact that we have again returned to the narrative present.[43]

The reader's introduction and geographical approach to Chevengur is thus multi-layered, and temporally and spatially staggered. It is viewed through the perspectives of different protagonists at different points in time and space. Each perspective is static. Aleksei Alekseevich's arrival is only inferred, as the narrator drifts from his place of sedentary contemplation of the town (a short 100 sazhens [213 metres!] away); and we later assume that the two horsemen have just arrived, although the text simply has them joyfully watching Chevengur at labour.[44] The temporal aspect is reduced: first, the journey in the narrator's mind's eye is without motion or development – it is pure space; secondly, the absolute irreversibility of time is placed in doubt by the confusion of past and present, living and ghosts. This is not to argue that spatialization is an inherent quality of anachrony: novelistic (and cinematic) convention has acclimatized readers to comprehensible shifts. Yet in Platonov's hands, the effect arises from the frequency of 'cutting' (both analeptically and between spatially remote protagonists) and is intensified by his recurrent omission to announce those cuts. In comparison with English or German, explicit signposting is more necessary in Russian, given its greater fluidity of tenses in narrative. Consequently, as in the above example, the reader is repeatedly disorientated by discoveries that the chronotope has shifted beneath his feet. It is precisely the imperceptibility of these shifts that leads the reader to apprehend the

[43] White, p. 107, describes these shifts in time and perspective in greater detail.
[44] Platonov, II, 149, 153.

concatenation of events as a coherent whole and therefore to accept their confused temporality, rather than to perceive their non-contiguousness in the *fabula*. This resonates with Ol'ga Meerson's notion of Platonov's 'non-alienation' [неостранение], his capacity to lull the reader into accepting that which ought to shock. Meerson focuses upon the ethical, but examination of Platonov's treatment of temporality suggests an equivalent desensitization to sequences without causal relationships.[45]

Another example of non-consequential juxtapositions comes from the *gubkom* scene, in which the narratorial cutting interchanges between various, presumably simultaneous strata of reality. Within the public meeting itself there is a polyphony of the participants. When Sasha and Gopner step outside the dialogism is extended further by the conveyance of their private concerns (Gopner's nausea), the still night, the presence of the fireman on the roof – watching the stars, musing and intermittently singing, apparently unconscious of the people below – and the continuing meeting indoors, out of which come the steps of a stranger in dialogue with himself, turning out to be Chepurnyi.[46] The interspersion of these different levels reminds us of the composition of Flaubert's 'country fair' scene, discussed in the introductory chapter and by Frank as an early example of the spatial aesthetic. Yet Platonov's passage is distinguished from *Madame Bovary* by the greater quantity and even more absurd incompatibility of juxtaposed strata. Moreover, the spatial structure exists within a context of the discussion of the end of time, and can therefore be more plausibly related to an idea of timelessness. Chepurnyi announces to the others: '"[у нас конец <...> всей всемирной истории"' [we have the end <...> of all worldwide history].[47]

Following Chepurnyi's disclosure about Chevengur, Sasha thinks of his absent friend Kopenkin, which prompts the narrator to objectively remove us to the latter:

> Копенкин стоял в этот час на крыльце Черновского сельсовета и тихо шептал стих о Розе, который он сам сочинил в текущие дни. Над ним висели звезды, готовые капнуть на голову, а за последним плетнем околицы простиралась социалистическая земля – родина будущих, неизвестных народов.[48]

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[45] See Ol'ga Meerson, *'Svobodnaia veshch'': Poetika neostraneniia u Andreia Platonova* (Oakland, CA: Berkeley Slavic Specialties, 1997).
[46] Platonov, II, 133-37.
[47] Ibid., II, 136.
[48] Ibid., II, 137.

> [Kopenkin stood at this time on the porch of the Chevengur Soviet and quietly whispered a verse about Rosa, which he had composed himself recently. Stars hung above him, ready to drop on his head, and beyond the last fencing of the outskirts stretched socialist land – homeland of unknown future peoples.]

This paragraph (after which the text returns to Sasha and the town) increases the spatial stretch and narratological heterogeneity of the scene considerably further. However, the scene as a whole does possess a thematic unity which arguably encourages us to perceive it spatially: the distant, yet emotionally present, Kopenkin shares the night, utopian aspirations and apocalyptic stars.

This structural principle based on the shifting perspectives of narrated and narratorial wandering is also replicated in syntax, both of the eccentric protagonists and of the super-*iurodivyi* narrator. Throughout *Chevengur* words lead their speakers to unexpected conclusions, in a manner that mirrors their blindness to direction, whether the path leads to the monastery or revolution. As on a structural level, the non-linearity of wandering speech is emphasized by the additional element of polyphony. The following passage, also from the *gubkom* scene, both exemplifies and remarks upon the way in which language gropes for meaning:

> – Свободная торговля для Советской власти, – продолжал докладчик, – все равно что подножный корм, которым залепится наша разруха хоть на самых срамных местах...
> – Понял? – тихо спросил Фуфаев у Гопнера. – Надо буржуазию в местный оборот взять – она тоже утильный предмет...
> – Во-во! – расслышал и Гопнер, почерневший от скрытой слабости.
> Оратор приостановился:
> – Ты что там, Гопнер, зверем гудишь? Ты не спеши соглашаться – для меня самого не все ясно. Я вас не убеждаю, а советуюсь с вами – я не самый умный...[49]
> ["For Soviet power, free trade," the speaker continued, "is no different from a pasture with which our ruin will be pasted over, at least in the most shameful places."
> "Got it?" whispered Fufaev to Gopner. "We have to get at the local bourgeoisie – it's a utility object."
> "That's right!" Gopner also caught the drift, having darkened due to a hidden feebleness.
> The orator paused.
> "Gopner, why are you honking like a beast? Don't you hurry to agree – it's not clear to me myself. I'm not trying to persuade you, I'm asking your advice. I'm not the cleverest one..."]

The speaker's disclosure that he is merely 'consulting' the audience contrasts comically with his prior rhetoric, and more importantly it reveals the openness with which his linguistic journey is undertaken. The non-consequential nature of

[49] Ibid., II, 134.

Fufaev's reaction, which is in fact a misunderstanding of the speaker's argument, is typical of dialogue in *Chevengur*. Fufaev responds to the image rather than the idea it is intended to signify, and the idea turns out to be secondary in the speaker's mind as well. The concatenation of words formed by a single mind are also disjointed, not least the orator's absurd 'pasture with which our ruin will be pasted over'.

The following passage further exemplifies the non-linear properties of dialogue and the juxtaposition of diverse images in sub-literate, figurative thought. The resultant indeterminacy is comically emphasized by the cynical Prokofii's indifference to any meaning expressed:

> – Так, Прош, и формулируй: пролетариат и прочие в его рядах сами своей собственной заботой организовали весь жилой мир, а потому дескать, заботиться о первоначальных заботчиках – стыд и позор, и нету в Чевенгуре умнейших кандидатов. Так, что ли, старик?
> – Так будет терпимо, – оценил старик.
> – Писец плотнику хату не поставит, – высказался Жеев.
> – Пастух сам знает, когда ему молоко пить, – сообщил за себя Кирей.
> – Пока человека не кончишь, он живет дурóм, – подал свой голос Пиюся.
> – Принято почти единогласно, – подсчитал Прокофий. – Переходим к текущим делам.[50]
> ["So, Prosha, formulate: the proletariat and miscellaneous within its ranks according to their own concerns have themselves organized the whole residential world, and that's why, you're saying, to take care of the initial concerns is a shame and disgrace, and there are no cleverer candidates in Chevengur. Is that it, old man?"
> "That will do," the old man appraised.
> "The scribe won't put up the carpenter's cabin," Zheev spoke out.
> "The shepherd himself knows when it's time to drink milk," Kirei informed on his own account.
> "Until you finish off a man, he lives as a fool," Piusia lent his voice.
> "Approved almost unanimously," reckoned Prokofii. "We move on to current business."]

In this example the images contributed by the various speakers are different perspectives upon a common subject, accumulating in a manner comparable with the multiple spatial dimensions of cubism.

Thus *Chevengur*'s linguistic and narrative structures both prove to be to some extent moulded by the plurality of characters pursuing essentially common ends, yet in varying directions and forms. In each of these examples, the surface effect is reminiscent of Patricia Carden's comments on the spatial aesthetic, and particularly of her description of Remizov's writing as characterized by a 'latticed' rather than

[50] Ibid., II, 219.

straight line, which 'frees prose of its time-bound linearity' (as discussed in chapter two). It is thus perhaps worth reminding ourselves that Remizov and his protégé Pil'niak were probably the most significant precedents for Platonov as he peopled his Russia-in-crisis with holy fools redolent of folklore and pre-Petrine culture.[51] In this context, *Chevengur* can be compared with the apocalyptically agitated polyphony and temporal dislocation of *Whirlwind Russia* and *Naked Year*. Platonov's eccentrics, seeking to understand time and their place in it, and ultimately to defeat it, function as both an explanatory context and agents of an overall *iurodivyi* vision.

In spite of the broadly unidirectional narrative sweep from Sasha's infancy until his arrival at Chevengur, this structural and linguistic wandering drastically suppresses the temporal axis of the novel. As Leonid Heller comments, although time passes, its 'unfolding remains difficult to grasp. I believe that this is because time in Platonov does not advance in a straight line: times mingle with one another, real and mental time, the present and past.'[52] However, while the 'timeless' impact is gaugeable, its significance is more elusive. It is difficult to establish whether the effect serves to endorse the cataclysmic metanarrative (as Remizov and Pil'niak do to some extent) or represents a more detached authorial exploration of his protagonists' collective consciousness and common idea. This difficulty arises from the mixture of irony and sympathy we detect in the absurdities and recognizable needs of Platonov's characters. More fundamentally, it stems from the fact that Platonov's narrator has no clear voice or separation from his characters (in marked contrast with Babel''s foregrounded narrator and also with the obvious distance between author and *skaz* narrator in Zoshchenko's stories of the early 1920s). The second phase (roughly the final third) of the novel, mainly set in the town of Chevengur, helps resolve these uncertainties.

The End

Geller's and Seifrid's studies, among others, are informed by an awareness that *Chevengur* consists of a succession of picaresque and utopian fictional genres. The

[51] Tolstaia-Segal, 'Ideologicheskie konteksty', p. 234, points to Remizov's influence on Platonov. See Greta N. Slobin, *Remizov's Fictions, 1900-1921* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1991), pp. xv-xvi, 152, on his broad and enduring influence on younger writers.
[52] Quoted by White, p. 103.

geographical end of the road brings the reader and a number of the cast of *duraki* introduced along the way to a purported terminus in time. Chepurnyi repeatedly makes the miraculous claim for Chevengur that communism has been attained, and time – cyclical and linear – therefore abolished:

> – У нас всему конец.
> – Чему ж конец-то? – недоверчиво спрашивал Гопнер.
> – Да всей всемирной истории – на что она нам нужна?[53]
> ["We have the end of everything."
> "The end of what?" doubtfully asked Gopner.
> "Of all worldwide history – what do we need it for?"]

> – А вот надо читать, дорогой товарищ: история уж кончилась, а ты и не заметил.[54]
> ["You ought to read, dear comrade: history has already ended, and you didn't even notice."]

> долгое время истории кончилось[55]
> [the long duration of history had ended]

With this arrival the emphasis of the novel shifts from striving toward an end onto exploring the End itself.

Platonov's protagonists articulate the beliefs invested in Chevengur, and their avowals and responses play the chief role in establishing the context of a timeless end. Chepurnyi, for example, loses quantitative awareness of passing time. Having forgotten the date and month and knowing only that this is the fifth day since the dawn of communism in Chevengur, he unwittingly founds a new calendar by dating a document 'Летом 5 ком' [Summer 5th Communism].[56] The Chevengurian part of the novel features numerous statements indicating how protagonists' senses of time and change have been affected:

> Теперь, братец ты мой, путей нету – люди доехали <...> в коммунизм жизни.[57]
> [Now, my brother, there are no more paths – people have arrived <...> at the communism of life.]

> Федор Федорович Гопнер уже выспался и наблюдал с колокольни чевенгурского храма тот город и то окружающее место, где, говорят, наступило будущее время и был начисто сделан коммунизм – оставалось лишь жить и находиться здесь.[58]
> [Fedor Fedorovich Gopner had already slept enough and from the bell tower of a Chevengur church observed the town and the surrounding area, where, they said,

[53] Platonov, II, 136.
[54] Ibid., II, 153.
[55] Ibid., II, 198.
[56] Ibid., II, 206.
[57] Ibid., II, 153.
[58] Ibid., II, 250.

future time had come and communism had been completed – it remained just to live and be here.]

The understanding of abstractions such as 'the future', 'communism' and 'the end' as ontological entities, brought into relief by their identification with the concrete present, involves considerable irony. Yet the distance between protagonists and author which this implies is qualified by the fact that Platonov continues to interact with their ideas on a structural level.

As indicated above, the arrival at the end of history presents a narratological puzzle: the logical problem of conceiving of timelessness is also the artistic challenge of how it can be represented. Platonov's solution relies on an escalated exploitation of the time-distorting devices described above. White remarks:

> Once the story arrives at its "destination," Chevengur's status as "the end of time" is paralleled on the level of the narrative structure itself. Events are presented out of chronological order, and the narrative jumps back and forth in time, sometimes with only the barest motivation. <...>
> Throughout the second half of the novel, Platonov subtly interferes with the reader's ability to discern a linear series of logically connected events, and thus with any attempts to sense the progress of time.[59]

White's reconstruction of the chronology of the second half of the novel (which is painstaking though not comprehensive) demonstrates an unexpectedly extensive scale of temporal dislocation.[60] In a particularly marked instance, Kopenkin slips unannounced from the text:

> Одни сутки Копенкин прожил в Чевенгуре обнадеженным, а потом устал от постоя в этом городе, не чувствуя в нем коммунизма; оказывается, Чепурный нисколько не знал вначале, после погребения буржуазии, как жить для счастья, и он уходил для сосредоточенности в дальние луга, чтобы там, в живой траве и одиночестве, предчувствовать коммунизм.[61]
> [Kopenkin spent one day in Chevengur with renewed hope, but then tired of quartering in this town, not feeling communism in it; it turned out that Chepurnyi at first, after the burial of the bourgeoisie, didn't at all know how to live for happiness, and he went off for concentration in the furthest meadows, in order to have a presentiment of communism in the living grass and solitariness.]

A central character in *Chevengur*, Kopenkin is not to reappear for another 42 pages. The transition from Kopenkin to Chepurnyi is effected by analogy: they are linked in their unsatisfied yearning for communism. It initially appears plausible that the

[59] White, pp. 108, 103.
[60] Ibid., pp. 114-15.
[61] Platonov, II, 182.

image of Chepurnyi arises in Kopenkin's mind, but the narrative focus proves to have altered mid-sentence.

The temporal confusion of such leaps is reinforced by repetitions. When Kopenkin arrives in Chevengur, he enters the former church, now accommodating the town soviet, and is immediately suspicious of Prokofii, demanding to inspect his documents.[62] On Kopenkin's reappearance in Chevengur, after that conspicuous disappearance from the text, he occupies a church that houses the *Revkom* [revolutionary committee] and briefly arrests Prokofii.[63] The slight discrepancies between the two episodes perhaps suggest caution in accepting the latter as a repetition of the same event, as White claims in her scheme. However, the two echo one another sufficiently to diminish any sense of linear development or even the kind of non-consequential change observed in the first part of the novel. Furthermore, as White's Chevengur-chronology makes clear, in addition to and in greater frequency than instances of plot recurrence, there are also many repetitions of segments of time throughout the latter part of the novel.[64]

These interferences in chronology are reinforced by the relative spatial constriction of the latter part of *Chevengur*. Narrative paths come into increasing spatial proximity until they converge at the 'end of the road'; indeed, the Chevengurians move their houses closer together, with the ultimate result that even the paths between them disappear.[65] The wandering, picaresque phase of the novel retained a degree of time in chronological sequence, if not development. By contrast, the stationary utopian setting eliminates this spatial dynamism, and therefore amplifies the effect of the continuing non-consequentialness in suppressing our sense of time.[66]

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[62] Ibid., II, 157-58.
[63] Ibid., II, 238.
[64] Rudakovskaia's research suggests that the structural depiction of timelessness has a verbal counterpart. She observes combinations of all three tenses in single statements, a sort of linguistic equivalent to spatialization through anachrony, and moreover that 'их количество явно увеличивается по мере приближения героев к Чевенгуру, особенно когда они находятся в самом городе и заявляют об отмене времени' [their quantity manifestly increases as the characters approach Chevengur, and especially when they are in the town itself and declare the abolition of time]. Rudakovskaia, pp. 81-82.
[65] This is a realization of Chepurnyi's metaphor that there are 'no more paths', as White, p. 106, points out.
[66] For this reason, it is arguable that the boundary of the picaresque / utopian chronotopes is closer to the last third of the novel, set mainly in Chevengur, rather than the half following the first mention of

Platonov's manipulation of structure in the utopian setting of Chevengur thus makes time incoherent, and this resonates with the protagonists' notions of the end-situation they have reached. Having established that structural devices complement the theme of timelessness, we can proceed to explore the nature of this life without time. Do the structural dislocations and repetitions create an overall pattern of revelation, or are the fragments of end-time meaninglessly contingent? This question of course relates to our contrasting theoretical approaches to modernist form.

As seen before, a significant role in the apprehension of stylistic properties is played by content, and in particular the protagonists' responses to their utopia. Since the narrator's – and therefore reader's – point of view is closely tied to his characters, our perception of the utopian city tends to pass through Chevengurian eyes. Given this proximity, it is perhaps unsurprising that the structurally-based temporal fragmentation appears to echo the protagonists' limited sense of time in Chevengur. Having reached their end, the holy fools lose an important point of orientation, and (naturally enough) struggle to comprehend time without a future. This is manifested in protagonists' perception of time, and particularly their weak memories. As we have seen, Chepurnyi's lack of awareness of public time results in a Chevengurian calendar. Like many other characters, his recollection of personal time is also faint: he remembers, for instance, burying his mother twice.[67]

Being at the end is reflected in the Chevengurians' actions as well as mental responses. The belief that in communism nature will labour on man's behalf and the more fundamental idea that history's work is completed both feed into to the dilemma of what to do. The utopian end has no further needs, therefore actions cannot fit into a scheme of cause and effect. As a result, actions are nonsensical and arbitrary. The Chevengurians pull their houses and gardens closer together, expel one population and invite another, and embark on the production of artefacts – a sword made of a bull's bones, buttons, monuments to one another of scarce

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the town, which White selects for her analysis. Indeed, this is borne out in White's scheme, in which the first three episodes replicate chronological order.

[67] Platonov, II, 210.

verisimilitude – which they know to be useless: 'Так мы ж работаем не для пользы, а друг для друга.' [We work not for utility, but for each other.][68]

Consequently, even if we succeed in unravelling the distorted chronology of the history of Chevengur, events and actions cannot be incorporated into a linear narrative of logically connected occurrences. Matching the reader's disorientation, the Chevengurians are bewildered by their utopia. Lacking a path to faithfully tread, they are forced into introspection about their state and how to live with it. This emphasizes the sense of stasis, not least because a yearning for something to happen is prevalent in their thoughts. Kopenkin complains in his letter to Sasha: 'Событий нету – говорят, это наука и история, но неизвестно.'[69] [There are no events – they say it's science and history, but who knows.]

The anguished boredom suffered in Chevengur gives its uneventfulness an existential value and provides the first doubts about its transformative significance. Kopenkin does not recognize the kind of communism (envisaged at Rosa Luxemburg's resurrection) he has been seeking:

> Одни сутки Копенкин прожил в Чевенгуре обнадеженным, а потом устал от постоя в этом городе, не чувствуя в нем коммунизма.[70]
> [Kopenkin spent a day in Chevengur filled with hope, but then grew tired from being quartered in the town, not feeling communism in it.]

Chevengur's evangelist Chepurnyi himself is plagued by loneliness and doubt: 'Чепурный бы заплакал от горя в пустом и постном Чевенгуре' [Chepurnyi could have burst into tears from grief in the empty and glum Chevengur].[71]

A prevailing mood of restless boredom casts doubt on whether communism has indeed been achieved, and this revives prior messianic impulses. Waiting and expectation become leitmotifs of the Chevengurian section of the novel. The narrative is punctuated by a succession of arrivals, each greeted with the excitement that would surround a saviour. The process commences, however, with an expulsion: the 'Second Coming' conceived by Prokofii to eliminate the bourgeoisie under the terms of its own beliefs. The completion of this task provokes transient euphoria at having finally established communism. Thus begins a pattern of

[68] Platonov, II, 286.
[69] Ibid., II, 158.
[70] Ibid., II, 182.
[71] Ibid., II, 185.

proclamation and diffidence, followed by new decisive enactments and new doubts: recurring regressions to a point at which communism is still to be battled toward.

One night the residents approach an alien object out on the steppe:

> – Это упавшая звезда – теперь ясно! – сказал Чепурный, не чуя горения своего сердца от долгого спешного хода. – Мы возьмем ее в Чевенгур и обтешем на пять концов. Это не враг, это к нам наука прилетела в коммунизм...
> Чепурный сел от радости, что к коммунизму и звезды влекутся. Тело упавшей звезды перестало скрежетать и двигаться.
> – Теперь жди любого блага, – объяснял всем Чепурный. – Тут тебе и звезды полетят к нам, и товарищи оттуда спустятся, и птицы могут заговорить, как отживевшие дети, – коммунизм дело нешуточное, он же светопреставление![72]
> ["It's a fallen star, now we're clear!" said Chepurnyi, not feeling his heart's burning from the long, hurried walk. "We'll take it to Chevengur and trim its five points. It isn't an enemy – science has flown to see us in communism..."
> Chepurnyi sat down from the happiness that even stars were attracted to communism. The body of the fallen star ceased scraping and moving.
> "Now you can expect every sort of blessing," Chepurnyi explained to everyone. "Here even stars will fly to us, and comrades will descend from up there, and birds will be able to start talking, like revived children. Communism's no joke, it's doomsday."]

The ecstasy of this apocalyptic-utopian affirmation is swiftly deflated. Petr Varfolomeevich Vekovoi recognizes the object as a tin drum boiler from the sugar refinery, and it turns out to accommodate a half-witted 'bourgeois' woman and her dead brother.

The arrival of the *prochie* [the miscellaneous class, associated by Geller with Marx's *Lumpenproletariat*], which has obvious overtones of the chosen people arriving at the promised land, is invested with the hope that this is the last ingredient required for communism.[73] Yet the miscellaneous only re-emphasize the Chevengurians' sense of incompletion. One of them states:

> – Товарищи, мы живем теперь тут, как население, и имеем свой принцип существования... И хотя ж мы низовая масса, хотя мы самая красная гуща, но нам кого-то не хватает и мы кого-то ждем![74]
> ["Comrades, we live here now, as a population, and we possess a principle of existence... And although we are the grass-roots mass, although we're the very red dregs, but still we are lacking someone and we are waiting for someone!"]

They share the yearning for someone, for companionship or leadership, still lacking in communism and thereby undermining it:

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[72] Platonov, II, 202.
[73] Geller, p. 229.
[74] Platonov, II, 280.

Мимо Дванова пробежал босой возбужденный прочий, за ним несся Кирей с небольшой собакой на руках, потому что она не поспевала за скоростью Кирея; немного позади бежало еще пятеро прочих, еще не знающих, куда они бегут, – эти пятеро были людьми уже в годах, однако они стремились вперед со счастьем малолетства <...>. По горизонту степи, как по горе, шел высокий дальний человек, все его туловище было окружено воздухом, только подошвы еле касались земной черты, и к нему неслись чевенгурские люди. Но человек шел, шел и начал скрываться по ту сторону видимости, а чевенгурцы промчались половину степи, потом начали возвращаться – опять одни.
Чепурный прибежал уже после, весь взволнованный и тревожный.
– Чего там, говори, пожалуйста! – спрашивал он у грустно бредущих прочих.
– Там шел человек, – рассказывали прочие. – Мы думали, он к нам идет, а он скрылся.[75]
[An excited, barefooted miscellaneous ran past Dvanov, behind him tore Kirei with a small dog in his hands, because it wouldn't be able to keep up with Kirei's speed; a little further back ran another five miscellaneous, who still did not know where they were running, – these five people were already advanced in years, but they rushed forward with the happiness of infancy. <...> A tall distant man was walking across the horizon of the steppe, as if along a mountain ridge; all his torso was surrounded by the air, only his soles stroked the earth's line; and the people of Chevengur were tearing toward him. But the man walked and walked and began to disappear on the other side of the visible, and the Chevengurians flew half way across the steppe, then began to return – once again alone.
Chepurnyi came running along afterwards, all excited and alarmed.
"What was there, say, please!" he asked the gloomily staggering miscellaneous.
"A man was walking over there," the miscellaneous told him. "We thought he was coming to us, but he disappeared."]

The motif of advancing without knowing wither ('бежало еще пятеро прочих, еще не знающих, куда они бегут') unexpectedly returns at the supposed destination.

Sasha Dvanov's arrival is also depicted in a context of quasi-messianic expectation. Kopenkin resolves to await Sasha and his 'final judgement' [ожидал Александра Дванова для оценки всего Чевенгура в целом].[76] He and Gopner enter the town to the peeling of church bells; the ringer, unable to play the *Internationale*, chimes the Easter matins.[77] Sasha and Gopner provide meaningful activity to their comrades by instigating technologically-based projects for the common good, but this happiness is also transient.

As no decisive *parousia* resolves the Chevengurians' existential doubts, communism is repeatedly cast back into the future. The substitution of a dynamic of becoming by one being proves very troubling for them. Lui the pedestrian perceives

[75] Ibid., II, 252-53.
[76] Ibid., II, 225.
[77] Ibid., II, 237.

the image of the temporal journey literally and therefore imagines throwing Chevengur into the distance in order to go back to seeking it:

> Не зная букв и книг, Луй убедился, что коммунизм должен быть непрерывным движением людей в даль земли. Он сколько раз говорил Чепурному, чтобы тот объявил коммунизм странствием и снял Чевенгур с вечной оседлости.[78]
> [Not acquainted with letters and books, Lui was convinced that communism must be the uninterrupted movement of people into the earth's distance. How many times he had said to Chepurnyi that he should declare communism to be wandering and remove Chevengur from eternal settlement.]

Lui subsequently walks out of the narrative for good.

Amid the frequent declarations of the immanence of communism, references to its imminence betray the fragility of that faith:

> Прокофий пошел искать Клавдюшу, а Чепурный – осмотреть город перед наступлением в нем коммунизма.[79]
> [Prokofii went to look for Klavdiusha, and Chepurnyi – to survey the town before the coming of communism in it.]

Later, Chepurnyi thinks: 'мне ведь жутко быть одному в сочельник коммунизма!' [I'm afraid to be on my own on the [Christmas] eve of communism!][80] However, twenty-five thousand words further on there is still talk of how communism will 'eventually come in its entirety' [в конце концов полностью наступит].[81]

The leitmotif of expectation and the consequent doubts about the utopia increasingly question the notion that Chevengur and Chevengurian time are existentially distinct from the world outside and before it. This expectation of a better future certainly connects utopian experience with that outside. At the 'open day' of revolutionary parties Zakhar Pavlovich asks the Bolshevik representative:

> – Хочем записаться вдвоем. Скоро конец всему наступит?
> – Социализм, что ль? – не понял человек. – Через год.[82]
> ["We both want to sign up. Will the end of everything come soon?"
> "Socialism, you mean?" the man misunderstood. "In a year's time."]

Similarly, on his travels with Sasha, Kopenkin orders Fedor Dostoevskii 'закончи к лету социализм!' [finish socialism by the summer!][83] This state of expectation is

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[78] Ibid., II, 162.
[79] Ibid., II, 183.
[80] Ibid., II, 185.
[81] Ibid., II, 246.
[82] Ibid., II, 45.

shared across the ideological spectrum. The old Chevengurians live in constant expectation of Christ's Second Coming (reified with horrifying irony in the purge). Later, the remaining 'semi-bourgeoisie' is expelled from Chevengur and sits in the rain, waiting for something to happen:

> Полубуржуи сидели на узлах непрерывными длинными рядами и ожидали какого-то явления.
> Явился Чепурный и приказал своим нетерпеливым голосом, чтобы все сейчас же навеки пропали из Чевенгура, потому что коммунизму ждать некогда и новый класс бездействует в ожидании жилищ и своего общего имущества. Остатки капитализма прослушали Чепурного, но продолжали сидеть в тишине и дожде.[84]
> [The semi-bourgeois sat on their bundles in long, continuous rows and awaited some kind of phenomenon.
> Chepurnyi showed up and ordered them with his impatient voice to vanish from Chevengur now and forever, because communism had no time to wait and a new class was laying idle in expectation of its lodging and communal property.
> The remnants of capitalism listened to Chepurnyi, but remained sitting in silence and the rain.]

If this state of expectation exists temporally and spatially beyond the utopian city as well as among its apostles, this profoundly challenges the claims made about Chevengur: it is subject to those same conditions it sought to abolish. Indeed, Chepurnyi's persisting anxieties and impatience seem to be rooted in that same existential condition in conflict with time that necessitated Chevengur. This relationship is exemplified by the following passage:

> Чепурного <...> коммунизм мучил, как мучила отца Дванова тайна посмертной жизни, и Чепурный не вытерпел тайны времени и прекратил долготу истории срочным устройством коммунизма в Чевенгуре, – так же, как рыбак Дванов не вытерпел своей жизни и превратил ее в смерть, чтобы заранее испытать красоту того света.[85]
> [Communism <...> tormented Chepurnyi just as the secret of posthumous life tormented Dvanov's father, and Chepurnyi could not endure the secret of time and severed the duration of history with the urgent organization of communism in Chevengur – just as the fisherman Dvanov could not endure his life and transformed it into death, in order sooner to experience the beauty of the other world.]

This chapter has demonstrated how the 'latticed' line of Platonov's novel traces the paths of a people wandering in search of the End, and that this 'holy-fool aesthetic' as a consequence has weak temporal coordinates. This gives the impression that time has been arrested according to protagonists' aspirations. However, the utopia's

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[83] Ibid., II, 92.
[84] Ibid., II, 190.
[85] Ibid., II, 239-40.

imperfections foster the probability that this timeless effect depicts a delusional idea, not an objective reality.

This notion is supported by the nature of the spatial setting for the Chevengurian project. Platonov describes the steppe, the stage for his paradise-seeking wanderers, in the following terms:

> Как конец миру, вставал дальний тихий горизонт, где небо касается земли, а человек человека. Конные путешественники ехали в глухую глубину своей родины.[86]
> [Like the end of the world rose the distant, silent horizon, where the sky touched the earth, and man touched man. The mounted travellers rode into the thick depths of their homeland.]

Platonov's adjective 'глухой' evokes remoteness, wildness, lack of communication with the outside world. The steppe is a blank chronotope, whose very emptiness facilitates conducting experiments with timelessness. Indeed, Chevengur exists as an idea before it materializes in narrative. It is prefigured by Shumilin's supposition that there may be such a place 'out there' on the steppe (thus instigating Sasha's quest) and, as we have seen, a manifestation of the idea pursued by the novel's many holy fools.[87] Given the blindness of their wandering, it is easy to regard their (and our) arrival as a leap into the hypothetical.

Moreover, the oneiric sequences unfolding in this nebulous, ideal space are redefined by moments when objective reality comes into sharp focus. Although concrete historical events are predominantly portrayed as occurring in a remote realm, the lurking presence of that simultaneous reality recurrently contextualizes the wanderers' project. During his Odyssey through the villages and steppe, Sasha Dvanov comes into occasional contact with the real world: for example, a newspaper article referring to the Kronstadt uprising, and the transformation of the town under NEP. Such instances jolt the reader into acknowledging a more concrete reality, where time and change persist unabated, outside this mythical realm on the periphery.

There are similar revelations when eccentrics consider their relationship with Bolshevik power. Pashintsev, like the Chevengurians, whom he will later join, feels

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[86] Ibid., II, 104.
[87] Ibid., II, 59-60.

disillusioned with the life after the End (in this case, after the victory of the Revolution):

> – Ты помнишь восемнадцатый и девятнадцатый год? – со слезами радости говорил Пашинцев. Навсегда потерянное время вызывало в нем яростные воспоминания.[88]
> ["Do you remember 1918 and 1919?" said Pashintsev with tears of joy. That forever lost time aroused furious recollections in him.]

He thus sets up a 'revolutionary sanctuary in the name of worldwide communism' in order to preserve the revolution 'в нетронутой геройской категории' [in its untouched, heroic category].[89] The tragic-ironic spectacle of Pashintsev attempting to hold time still at the moment of transcendence is resolved in humiliation. He is driven out of the cellar in which he was barricaded with blank grenades and a suit of armour, and his clothes are stolen by the local *muzhiki*.

Similarly, when Chepurnyi imagines receiving a letter from Lenin, his absurd fantasy underlines the remoteness of the Kremlin and the impossibility of any communication between the two realms:

> Ленин, наверное, пишет Чепурному письмо, <...> чтобы Чепурный ничего не боялся, потому что долгое время истории кончилось, <...> чтобы Чепурный со всеми товарищами ожидал к себе в коммунизм его, Ленина, в гости, дабы обнять в Чевенгуре всех мучеников земли и положить конец движению несчастья в жизни. А затем Ленин шлет поклон и приказывает упрочиться коммунизму в Чевенгуре навеки.[90]
> [Lenin was probably writing a letter to Chepurnyi, <...> so that Chepurnyi would not fear anything, because the long duration of history had ended, <...> so that Chepurnyi and all the comrades would expect Lenin's visit, in order for him to embrace all the earth's sufferers in Chevengur and bring an end to the movement of unhappiness in life. And then Lenin will send his regards and orders communism in Chevengur to be consolidated forever.]

The character of Simon Serbinov, an educated, Muscovite Party official, is another reminder of the distant reality beyond the steppe. His abrupt introduction – and therefore that of Moscow – occurs at a point where the narrative is situated entirely in Chevengur, and this sudden broadening of the spatial scope re-illuminates the polarity. When Serbinov is sent to Chevengur to investigate rumours of lawlessness, he himself registers the disjunction of the two chronotopes: 'ему представлялось, что не только пространство, но и время отделяет его от Москвы' [it seemed to

[88] Ibid., II, 109.
[89] Ibid., II, 110.
[90] Ibid., II, 196.

him that not only space but also time separated him from Moscow].[91] The distinctness of Serbinov's reality from the steppe is also conveyed by the language used to describe him. As evident in the passage below, the narrator's voice, usually close to his illiterate subjects, now imitates Serbinov's and the language of the literate, urban intelligentsia:

> Симон перечитал написанное, получилось умно, двусмысленно, враждебно и насмешливо над обоими – и над губернией, и над Чевенгуром, – так всегда писал Сербинов про тех, которых не надеялся приобрести в товарищи.[92]
> [Simon reread what he had written. It had turned out clever, ambiguous, hostile and mocking, toward both the province and Chevengur. Serbinov always wrote thus about those he had no hope of acquiring as comrades.]

Given such a disparity, it is unsurprising that Serbinov initially fails to comprehend his Chevengurian hosts' eccentricities. Nonetheless, having fulfilled his duty to make a report, he lingers among the Chevengurians. There arises the prospect that the sophisticated Serbinov might join the venerable Russian tradition of spiritual regeneration through acquaintance with ideas rooted in the people (albeit in the hands of a rather atypical *narod*). However, the nascent synthesis of the two chronotopes is not allowed to develop.

These encounters with a geographical and historical 'real world' beyond Chevengur, subversive to the notion of an absolute end, perhaps imply that Platonov's spatial simulation of timelessness is nothing more than an ironic projection of the Chevengurian idea. Yet the most fundamental threat to the Chevengurian dream is posed by the gradual reintroduction of the Fedorovian theme of nature and its hostility to life into the utopian narrative.

Chevengur is presented to the reader during the summer, and Chepurnyi expects that the sun will henceforth evermore support the liberated proletariat. However, the eternal summer slips away. The arrival of a beggar-woman with her sick child presents a test case for the notion that nature now serves to sustain life, and the failure to keep the child alive damages the belief that time (and with it death) has been overcome:

> Копенкин догадался, что в Чевенгуре нет никакого коммунизма – женщина только что принесла ребенка, а он умер.[93]

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[91] Ibid., II, 287.
[92] Ibid., II, 287.
[93] Ibid., II, 229.

[Kopenkin guessed that there wasn't any communism in Chevengur – the woman had only just brought the child, and he died.]

The author begins to insert signs that the seasons are turning, and autumn descends inevitably on Chevengur. Noticing that summer has passed and the ephemeralness of the sun's support, Sasha laments the relentlessness of time:

> Синий лист дерева легко упал близ Дванова, по краям он уже пожелтел, он отжил, умер и возвращался в покой земли; кончалось позднее лето, наступала осень – время густых рос и опустелых степных дорог. Дванов и Гопнер поглядели на небо – оно им показалось более высоким, потому что уже лишалось смутной силы солнца, делавшей небо туманным и низким. Дванов почувствовал тоску по прошедшему времени: оно постоянно сбивается и исчезает, а человек остается на одном месте со своей надеждой на будущее <...>[94]
> [The blue leaf of a tree fell close to Dvanov, at its edges it had already turned yellow, it had become obsolete, died and was returning to the repose of the earth; late summer had ended, autumn had come – the time of heavy dews and deserted roads on the steppes. Dvanov and Gopner looked at the sky – it seemed to them higher up, because it had already been deprived of the vague power of the sun, which had made the sky hazy and low. Dvanov sensed an anguished yearning for past time: it perpetually slips away and disappears, while man stays in the same place with his hope for the future <...>]

Chevengur seems to be subject, after all, to the laws of nature. Sasha has the further intuition that 'Революция прошла как день <...> в мире было как вечером' [the Revolution passed like a day <...> it was like evening in the world].[95] His image of the day seems to indicate a deeper ambivalence with regard to eschatological claims for history. The day passes from morning to night, yet does not represent an absolute end; the image therefore appears to locate linear history within a larger, cyclical scheme of things. There follows an extension of the metaphor:

> Дванов почувствовал, что и в нем наступает вечер, время зрелости, время счастья или сожаления. В такой же, свой вечер жизни отец Дванова навсегда скрылся в глубине озера Мутево, желая раньше времени увидеть будущее утро.[96]
> [Dvanov sensed that evening was beginning in him as well, a time of ripeness, a time of happiness or regret. On his same evening of life, Dvanov's father had disappeared in the depths of Lake Mutevo, wishing to see the next morning before its time.]

This transposes the insight onto an existential level, placing life and history (which is life's consciousness of the world beyond its own temporal frontiers) within the same circumscription: both are subsumed in nature.

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[94] Ibid., II, 252.
[95] Ibid., II, 239.
[96] Ibid., II, 239.

Chevengur's flirtation with eternity is brought to a definitive end on a late autumn evening by a mock Armageddon: a sudden attack by anonymous soldiers with the 'mechanical force of victory' [машинальная сила победы].[97] Readings of the novel (such as Geller's) that emphasize Platonov's critique of bureaucratization replacing brotherly ideals identify this unit with the arbitrary centre. However, the attackers also possess the invulnerability of nature. When someone falls among their ranks they calmly regroup, recalling Zakhar Pavlovich's observation of nature not being harmed by individual death. Given the plausibility of both variants, the mysterious force could be regarded as an amalgam of the realities Chevengur has sought to deny, suggestive of both the supremacy of nature and the impossibility of man's historical quest for perfection. In any case, the Chevengurians' deaths – in paradise – serve to confirm their defencelessness against natural time.

After the annihilation of the city at the end of history, the novel concludes cyclically, further reaffirming nature's hegemony. Sasha returns to Lake Mutevo, where he finds the fishing rod he had left there after his father's suicide. Following his father's footsteps, he drowns himself, committing his body to nature 'в поисках той дороги, по которой когда-то прошел отец в любопытстве смерти' [in search for that path along which his father once walked out of curiosity about death].[98] Having observed the failure to bring about reunion with mothers and fathers by means of utopian reorganization, it is only by death – not resurrection – that he can be with his father and relieve his loneliness.

Chevengur closes on a further cyclical note. Precisely echoing the incident which had brought him and the adolescent Sasha together, Zakhar sends Prokofii to search for Sasha. Yet on this occasion, the reader knows, Prokofii will be unable to accomplish his task. This cyclical motif thereby reminds one that Sasha's suicide is a separation from his foster-father, as well as a hoped reunion with his biological father.

Whereas death has been seen in the context of the patterns of nature and as a path to another realm, the ending of the novel serves to accentuate its finality in the context

[97] Ibid., II, 302.
[98] Ibid., II, 306.

of human relationships.[99] As a result, we become aware of a continuity between the picaresque and utopian phases of the novel.

Reassessing Spatial Form

The thematic confirmation that natural time flows uninterrupted, serving to disprove the ontological distinction between the road and the destination, suggests that the juxtapositional spatialism observed in both parts of *Chevengur* can also be considered as a continuity – contrasting quantitatively but not necessarily qualitatively. Particularly after the failure of Chevengur has cemented the ironic distance the reader feels toward Platonov's eccentrics, the notion that the timeless effect is a projection of the utopian idea appears convincing. However, there is another possibility. Rudakovskaia's and Dmitrovskaia's aforementioned analyses of *Chevengur* reveal how distortions of language help dramatize the novel's conceptions of time. Their interesting conclusions encourage us to seek similarities in the text's non-linearity on a structural level.

Some of their findings appear to chime with the structural effects already discussed. Crucially, Platonov is found to often divest language of its function of conveying a temporal signification, with the result that 'случайное и временное становится вневременным и вечным.' [the incidental and temporal becomes timeless and eternal].[100] An important manifestation of this, discussed by both scholars, is the frequent, unorthodox application of imperfective verbs (suggestive of process or repetition) to single, complete actions.[101] Consequently, actions are fixed as states:

> Все время Захар Павлович работал, чтобы *забывать* голод.[102]
> [Zakhar Pavlovich worked all the time in order to be forgetting his hunger.]
>
> Дети *просыпались* рано, они *начинали* драться друг с другом в темноте, когда петухи еще дремали, а старики *просыпались* только по второму разу и чесали пролежни.[103]
> [The children woke up early, they began to scrap with each other in the darkness, when the cock was still slumbering, and the old men woke up only for a second time and scratched their bedsores.]

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[99] The fact that the previously acquisitive Prokofii offers to search for Sasha without reward reminds us, along with the short-lived hope associated with Sasha's and Serbinov's arrivals in Chevengur, that Platonov's pessimism is not absolute, despite the tragic ending.
[100] Dmitrovskaia, 'Kategorii vremeni', p. 77.
[101] See Rudakovskaia, p. 80, and Dmitrovskaia, 'Kategorii vremeni', p. 78.
[102] Platonov, II, 6. Italics added.
[103] Ibid., II, 19. Note that this passage narrates a particular instance, not the habitual past implied by the imperfective verbs.

The '*оставалось* лишь жить' quoted above is another example.

Rudakovskaia and Dmitrovskaia point out a number of other prolonging devices with similar effects, for instance, the substitution of a verb – 'было стояние' [there was a standing], 'мать была умершая' [the mother was 'having died'], 'оставались жить спящими' [they remained to live sleeping] – and lexical emphasis: the frequently recurring 'длинный' [long], 'медленный' [slow], and 'во время' [during].

However, when Rudakovskaia writes:

> Для Платонова чрезвычайно важной оказывается возможность зафиксировать, продлить какое-либо состояние окружающей его персонажей природы.[104]
> [For Platonov it turns out to be extremely important to be able to fix, to prolong, any condition of nature surrounding his characters.]

– this linguistic 'fixing' of time has nothing to do with the transcendental idea of timelessness associated with apocalyptic or utopian consummation. Instead, the scholars apprehend them as evocations of the natural time perceived by Platonov's protagonists. They draw on the context of Platonov's Fedorov-influenced existential dissatisfaction with nature's cyclical infinitude and the kind of statements quoted above, indicating the ennui, restlessness and eschatological aspirations it provokes.[105] Prolonging an action by these various means replicates nature's constant, repetitive flux without changing: a cause of existential dread for humans, who are drawn to the possibility of transformation. (Zakhar Pavlovich remarks to himself, 'Удивительно, я скоро умру, а все тот же' [It's amazing – I'll die soon, and I'm just the same as I was].[106]) Thus, according to this reading, the monotonously durative quality of natural time is imprinted on a language that conveys human experience within nature.

The question therefore arises of whether the structural non-linearity can be associated with repetitive, directionless natural time, rather than (or in addition to) the timelessness of a utopian / eschatological end. Protagonists' impressions of time in nature are of a source of existential boredom and unchanging uniformity, because its continuum follows a cyclical pattern. The arbitrary sequences in the wandering

[104] Rudakovskaia, p. 80.
[105] Indeed, Rudakovskaia claims that Platonov's 'incorrect' usage of perfective verbs often expresses a desire to overcome duration and impatience to leap to the end. Ibid., p. 82.
[106] Platonov, II, 31.

structure of the first part and the dislocated stasis of the second resonate with this sense of time perhaps flowing, but out of joint with the direction required by humanity. The adventuring part of *Chevengur* represents a sequence of events that does not proceed as a development, and therefore time passes without a sensation of meaningful linearity. The part of the work situated at the destination is an apparent indication that absolute change has, after all, occurred. However, suspecting, and then being certain, that it has not, we are compelled to reassess Chevengur's timelessness. Deprived of its utopian claim and contextualized by the protagonists' dissatisfaction, this stasis also comes to reveal a correspondence with the bleak conception of natural time.

Contemplating the novel as a whole, we see that it is the antithesis of the *Bildungsroman* we are led to expect by an opening that introduces a young Sasha setting out in life, seeking to make sense of his existence.[107] The temporal unfolding of Sasha's life – the central strand in the woven narrative – is not accompanied by a growth in knowledge or a gradual accommodation with the world. Sasha matches the other characters in the constancy of his condition, regardless of time and place. If Platonov's style evokes timelessness, then it is one based on denying his characters the capacity to change: an entrapment in cyclical time, not a liberation from it. Indeed, the only real indication of the passing of time in Sasha's life is that he gradually becomes older, which merely marks his place in the natural rhythm.

The 'spatial' panorama of the complex whole of *Chevengur* also exposes a striking degree of recurrence. We have already remarked upon the repetitions of single narrative events and segments of time, and the cyclical note upon which the novel concludes. In addition to this, the pattern of the novel is so punctuated by key motifs that they appear as constants. Themes which ought to be indicative of dynamism – arrival and departure, expectation – turn into badges of uniformity and immutability as a consequence of their recurrence as we switch between narrative strands. The plurality of characters and their narrative paths also stresses the commonality of their existential situation. Almost every protagonist suffers from boredom, fears loneliness and yearns for company. Most are defined by a state of orphanhood and a (perhaps subconscious) longing for a deceased parent. A general

[107] See Bethea, p. 168, and Seifrid, p. 104.

picture accumulates from the fleeting experiences of pilgrims, workers, the bourgeoisie and Serbinov. Therefore, the contrapuntal texture, polyphonic in the multiplicity of 270 protagonists and their locations, turns out to carry a deceptively homophonic account of existence and human needs.[108] In this way Platonov's texture also replicates the even pulse of repetitive and uniform natural time.

Having discussed the relationship between form and the theme of the End, White similarly concludes that the structure of *Chevengur* is ultimately cyclical; however, (possibly due to lack of space) she fails to explain the coexistence of these clashing associations. There is a tension between our two views of the structural evocation of time – as an approaching and immanent End, or as cyclical time – which presents us with a significant problem of mediation.

There are two ways of understanding this polarity. The first is to remind ourselves that *Chevengur* is not, after all, a realistic portrait of Revolutionary Russia, and its protagonists are drawn from an eccentric 'ten percent'. When we consider it as a novel of ideas, and the overhaul of time as its central idea, we can conceive of the work as a dynamic reflection of Platonov's maturing thought. The author attempts to imagine a Fedorovian victory over nature and time (the cherished goal of his youth) but depicts this ideal being thwarted by the supremacy of the natural. In other words, Platonov is playing with alternative conceptions of time and finds a formal structure that feeds into both. He encourages the reader to viscerally experience a logically inconceivable End, momentarily seducing us into believing in its hypothetical reality. Simultaneously, but becoming clear only after the collapse of the idea, the structure confirms the antithetical conception of time in nature.

The second means of resolving this tension is not incompatible with the first. We can regard the dualism as reflecting man's ambivalent relationship to nature and time, being both part of nature, subject to the laws of natural cycles, and aspiring to transcend it. Consequently, both linear and recurring time exist within the human mind. This is certainly true of *Chevengur*'s protagonists, who suffer from the

[108] The total number of protagonists is cited in I.V. Popova, 'Kosmos-khaos-kosmos (filosofiia prostranstva i vremeni v proizvedeniakh E.I. Zamiatina, A.P. Platonova i M.M. Prishvina)', in *Tvorcheskoe nasledie Evgeniia Zamiatina: Vzgliad iz segodnia*, ed. by L.V. Poliakova (Tambov, 2000), pp. 34-39 (p. 36).

biological cycle and yearn to break from it. Furthermore, to the extent that the narrator usually has a non-privileged position in relaying the thoughts and feelings of the holy fools, the novel's authorial consciousness perhaps shares this confused and tragic attachment to irreconcilable schemes of time.

Mediating these two approaches to the problem is fundamentally a question of defining the balance between authorial distance from and involvement in the Chevengurian project. The issue of how far the narrator is an extension of the protagonists or the author is itself fraught with ambiguity. However, irony in *Chevengur* is predominantly felt as a disjunction between the novel's reality and the reader's. Platonov's narrator does not assume an active role in exposing it; on the contrary, the narratorial voice seamlessly blends with the inner voices of the work's many characters, hinting at sympathy or even that 'the narrator' is simply a totality of the many individual voices. Therefore, insofar as the text is close to the protagonists' perceptions, it embodies their contradictions.

In contemplating this problem it is useful to recall the precedent of Belyi's *Second Symphony*, a text with which *Chevengur* has affinities.[109] As outlined in the Precursors chapter, Belyi's experimental work constructs a similar opposition between cyclical time with its 'mystical boredom' and the desire to escape from it into apocalyptic timelessness. Moreover, although Belyi is significantly more optimistic about the existence of a transcendent realm than Platonov in *Chevengur*, he treats the mystic Sergei Musatov and his followers with a similar mixture of irony and sympathy. As in Platonov's novel, both the ideas of eternal return and timelessness in the *Second Symphony* resonate in its form (through recurring leitmotifs and non-consequential fragmentation, respectively) and, as seen earlier, this duality of form generates similar interpretive problems. Therefore, there is a strong possibility that Platonov drew upon Belyi's early prose as a model for depicting time through textual structure, and this encourages us to accept the notion that he too intended to convey both schemes.

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[109] Chapter two sets out the extent to which Belyi's symphonies were read in the 1920s onward. Although it is difficult to prove that Platonov read them, his post-Symbolist youth is likely to have acquainted him with the works of pro-Revolutionary Symbolists, and the religious-utopian rhetoric Platonov plays with derives from writers such as Belyi. For instance, Chepurnyi's phrase 'конец всей всемирной истории' [the end of all worldwide history] occurs verbatim in Belyi's 'The Apocalypse in Russian Poetry'. Andrei Belyi, 'Apokalipsis v russkoi poezii', in his *Simvolizm kak miroponimanie* (Moscow: Respublika, 1994), pp. 408-17 (p. 417).

Now that we have dealt with the literal, thematic significations of modernist form in *Chevengur*, it remains to assess whether it psychologically manifests a spatial impact (according to Frank's paradigm) and thus relates to pre-Revolutionary transformative-apocalyptic conceptions of art. In the previous chapter it was found that while Babel' transmits a clear scepticism toward the wilder claims of Revolutionary eschatology, he relies upon an aesthetic of revelation. Does Platonov display a similar debt to Symbolist-based ideas of art as religious experience?

Most readers would quickly conclude that *Chevengur*'s representation of Russia's cataclysmic years lacks the revelatory effect of *Red Cavalry*. One can identify reasons for this in the technical differences between Platonov's and Babel''s styles, although both fragment the linear sequence of time. The first reason has already been touched upon. While Platonov's novel is stratified, simultaneously following the progress of various characters, there is a comparatively large degree of homogeneity in terms of the characters' relationship with their world, even if some become Bolsheviks and others head for secluded monasteries. The repetitiveness of experience and needs – wandering, yearning for change and reunion – creates a relatively uniform texture. Whereas Platonov's fragmentation is based upon elements that are spatially and temporally remote, but often thematically analogous, Babel' deliberately juxtaposes diverse images, characters and aspirations. The retrospective task of reading them as a whole is thus the performance of an intuitive leap, and the discovery of unexpected connections creates the sensation of revelation. By contrast, Platonov's whole is rather tragically homogeneous.

A second significant difference between the two writers resides in their respective narrators. Babel''s narrator Liutov functions as a lyrical consciousness to process and respond to disparate perceptions, and thereby to fuse them into a complex, but in some way whole, 'meta-experience'. He is suited to this role because he is himself a protagonist, directly affected by and interested in what he witnesses, and also because he is quite closely identified with the author and thus has the identity of an artistically sensitive observer. He is thus more capable of 'prophetic' detachment from the subject matter than Platonov's narrator, as well as being more tangibly involved. Platonov's narrator is just a voice, often simply a vehicle for the inner voices of the men (and occasionally of women and animals!) in the novel, and

very rarely intervenes to make connections between events, ideas or protagonists. (Given the degree of homogeneity in *Chevengur*, Platonov does not require a writerly figure like Liutov to do so.) Therefore, Babel''s narrator has more scope for moments of epiphany: a narrator with a personality can undergo shifts in mood and sudden manifestations of understanding. As we have seen, such changes in attitude provide the space to reassess and 'transcend' preceding elements. By comparison, Platonov's narrative, tied to its characters, lacks this capacity to remove itself to a higher perspective from which to make sense of the common plight.

Platonov's narrator neither constructs shocking dissonances nor transcends them aesthetically. When the text juxtaposes incongruous elements, it does so in the unsophisticated voice of its protagonists, as a result of which the reader is led to accept this strangeness as a reflection of the eccentric and semi-literate world depicted. As White remarks of *Chevengur*'s temporal disjunctions, 'none of these reversals, repetitions and transformations is dramatically signalled in the text; in fact, most are nearly imperceptible.'[110] Applied to this context, Meerson's aforementioned concept of 'non-alienation' reminds us of the way in which Platonov turns the modernist aesthetic inside-out. Instead of adding aesthetic value to the world through defamiliarization, Platonov tricks us into apprehending the surreal as almost normal.

On the other hand, the proximity of the narrator to the protagonists leaves a strong imprint of their contemplative-existential attitude upon the text, and this emphasis on inner experience is comparable to Babel''s epiphanic space. The depth of feeling and its naïve, semi-literate expression produce a devastatingly poignant mood, which provokes sympathetic involvement in the reader. That this attitude prompts the reader to reconstruct the thematically analogous fragments of *Chevengur* and perceive them as a unified entity is plausible. Yet it is hard to argue that such a whole appears transcendentally timeless, for the reasons outlined above.

[110] White, p. 103.

Philosophical Implications

Platonov's motif of a wooden cross upon a grave exemplifies his deeply humane attitude to mankind's pursuit of impossible ideals. The cross is at once a point of communication between the living and the dead, an expression of the hopes of the living for a reunion with loved-ones and for personal resurrection, and – in its own fragile transience – a pathetic expression of the hopelessness of the aspirations it symbolizes:

> Направо от дороги Дванова, на размытом оползшем кургане, лежал деревенский погост. Верно стояли бедные кресты, обветшалые от действия ветра и вод. Они напоминали живым, бредущим мимо крестов, что мертвые прожили зря и хотят воскреснуть. Дванов поднял крестам свою руку, чтобы они передали его сочувствие мертвым в могилы.[111]
> [To the right of Dvanov's road, on an eroded burial mound, lay a country churchyard. The poor crosses faithfully stood, dilapidated from the effect of wind and water. They reminded the living, shuffling past the crosses, that the dead had lived in vain and want to return to life. Dvanov raised his hand to the crosses, so they would pass on his sympathy to the dead in the graves.]
>
> Сербинов сказал через дверь, что вчера его мать закопали и он зашел за Софьей Александровной пойти вместе на кладбище, чтобы посмотреть, где его мать будет находиться до самого конца света. <...> [На кладбище] уже начиналась осень, на могилы похороненных людей падали умершие листья. Среди высоких трав и древесных кущ стояли притаившиеся кресты вечной памяти, похожие на людей, тщетно раскинувших руки для объятий погибших.[112]
> [Serbinov said through the door that they'd buried his mother yesterday and he'd come for Sof'ia Aleksandrovna to go to the cemetery together, to see where his mother would be until the very end of the world. <...> At the cemetery autumn had already begun, and dead leaves fell onto the graves of buried people. Among the tall grasses and woody foliage stood concealed crosses of eternal memory, which looked like people vainly stretching their arms to embrace the dead.]

For Platonov, as for Babel', such an ethic of sympathy exists without resting on the foundation of a transcendent realm. Yet Platonov is further than Babel' from such a basis, insofar as he rejects the aesthetic ersatz for spiritual experience. Platonov, unlike Babel', does not make the role of art an important theme, his narrator does not assume the stance of an artist whose centralized point of view encourages him to look at surfaces and their aesthetic aspect. As argued in the previous chapter, any sense of revelatory transcendence in *Red Cavalry* consists in something akin to aesthetic experience: it is the artist's acceptance – and even embrace – of the world in its tragic and fragmented condition. Platonov's modernism, on the other hand, has a greater affinity with the utopian *Proletkul't* movement than the aestheticist

[111] Platonov, II, 80.
[112] Ibid., II, 276-77.

strands of 1920s modernism, and he has no allegiance to the aesthetic as a value in itself.[113] In *Chevengur*'s approach to the apocalyptic model the only transcendence worth aspiring toward (and eventually denied) is a literal, physical transformation of life. One can therefore claim that art for Platonov is concerned with representing reality – or possible realities – where Babel' remains closer to the Symbolist tradition (and Worringer's and Frank's theses) viewing art as transformation.

The two writers' differing attitudes to the aesthetic reflect deeper philosophical divergences. Babel' acknowledges cyclical patterns of time in history and in the biological and astronomical worlds and, contrasting them with various messianisms, implies that nothing under the sun is new or lasting. However, he does not regard the cycles of nature with such dread as Platonov. Birth counterbalances death and the fertile natural world brings transient aesthetic joy and material sustenance to the living. (Babel''s attitude to destruction tends to be most elegiac on cultural and ethical levels, rather than an existential one.) By contrast, nature's hostility toward the human desire to remain alive is paramount for Platonov, which is a reason not to engage with it aesthetically.

One might surmise that Babel''s lesser despair at nature stems from an implicit belief in being outside and superior to it, which is an ideological remnant of the religious tradition he is moving away from. Arguably, therefore, Platonov engages more rigorously with the philosophical ramifications of materialism. Neither his narrator nor his characters are aesthetes, because mankind is rooted in the physical world, and if a mind is a product of nature, it cannot overcome it. Platonov emphasizes the physicality of thought, which is a mysterious negotiation of dull feelings and the abstractions of language. (In *Chevengur* there is a division of labour between Chepurnyi, who feels and thinks, and Prokofii, who 'formulates'.) Man's belonging to and thus subjugation to nature becomes particularly evident in relation to depictions of death. The description of a dying Red Army soldier, reclaimed by nature, recalls certain Ovidian transformations and Ariel's 'Full fadom five' in *The Tempest*:

> Но глаза не закрывались, а выгорали и выцветали, превращаясь в мутный минерал. В его умерших глазах явственно прошли отражения облачного неба –

[113] See Bethea, p. 161.

как будто природа возвратилась в человека после мешавшей ей встречной жизни, и красноармеец, чтобы не мучиться, приспособился к ней смертью.[114]
[But his eyes would not close, but burnt out and faded, turning into a dull mineral. In his deceased eyes distinctly passed a reflection of the cloudy sky – as though nature had come back into the man after life, which, heading in the opposite direction, had hindered it, – and the Red Army soldier, in order not to suffer, adapted himself to nature through death.]

Serbinov's ambivalent death also contains a note of willingness:

Симон упал от удара копытом в живот и почувствовал, как сердце отошло вдаль и оттуда стремилось снова пробиться в жизнь. Сербинов следил за сердцем и не особо желал ему успеха.[115]
[Simon fell from the blow of the hoof and felt his heart had receded into the distance and was trying to struggle back to life. Serbinov observed his heart's efforts and did not especially wish it success.]

By stressing death's physicality and the sense that the dying man is being 'recalled', Platonov suggests that we understand at some level that we are merely components of nature and cannot object to this transference of matter to matter.

This inevitably affects Platonov's approach to the apocalypse myth and his own Fedorovian utopia, which are both visions of a victory over the corruptibility of matter. The messianic motif of expectation undergoes a sardonic twist after the destruction of Chevengur. It occurs first in Kopenkin's last words to Sasha:

– Я задержался в Чевенгуре и вот теперь кончаюсь, а Роза будет мучиться в земле одна...
Копенкин вдруг сел и еще раз прогремел боевым голосом:
– Нас ведь ожидают, товарищ Дванов! – и лег мертвым лицом вниз, а сам стал весь горячий.[116]
["I stayed too long in Chevengur and now I'm dying, and Rosa will suffer alone in the earth..."
Kopenkin suddenly sat up and again thundered in an urgent voice:
"You know they await us, comrade Dvanov!" – and he lay face down, dead, and himself became hot all over.]

One page later Platonov describes Sasha's suicide:

И там есть тесное, неразлучное место Александру, где ожидают возвращения вечной дружбой той крови, которая однажды была разделена в теле отца для сына.[117]
[And there is a place there, close and inseparable to Aleksandr, where they await the return through eternal friendship of that blood, which was once separated in the body of the father for the son.]

[114] Platonov, II, 55.
[115] Ibid., II, 304.
[116] Ibid., II, 305.
[117] Ibid., II, 306.

This expectation differs from that which precedes it, where the present is orientated toward the future. Here it is the living, on the threshold of death, who are expected. Whether they are expected by nature or by the already dead (Rosa Luxemburg, the fisherman), their destiny is to join both.

In depicting how the material, physical world rebuffs human attempts to overcome it, Platonov reduces the mystical reunion with the dead to a view of our shared mortality. The great Judeo-Christian scheme of history directed from outside is replaced by a view of temporal uniformity at odds with linear narrative. In this respect, Platonov's anti-*Bildungsroman* is closer than Babel' to Kermode's conception of the development of the plot-as-worldview. Platonov's depiction of an attempt to impose change and closure on the plot of history chimes with Kermode's concept of the open modern text reflecting a more scientific, and less mythic, understanding of our existence. Moreover, the fact that *Chevengur* arrives at a view of the supremacy of the material world and artifice of linear schemes of time by means of subverting the apocalypse narrative that its protagonists have set out to realize affirms Kermode's theory in a more literal manner than any of the Western modernist texts he analyzes. In this sense, Frank's spatial theory is principally useful as a tool to illustrate the way in which structure manipulates our perception of time, rather than as a means to associate the resultant timelessness with an aesthetic or mythical transcendence of time.

Platonov goes further than Blok and Belyi in exploring what might follow the end of the eschatological journey, and addresses the discourse more directly than Babel'. The consequence is to question the End as both a possibility and an aspiration. If the two sections of *The Foundation Pit* represent hell and purgatory (as A. Kharitonov suggests) then Chevengur is another curtailed paradise.[118] The loss of linearity and the existential boredom it triggers echoes Zamiatin's warning (quoting H.G. Wells) in 'Paradise' of how people would get fed up with utopia. Time and space would freeze, leaving people to simply tend the garden of Eden

[118] A.A. Kharitonov, 'Arkhitektonika povesti A. Platonova "Kotlovan"', in *Tvorchestvo Andreia Platonova: Issledovaniia i materialy. Bibliografiia*, ed. by Valerii V'iugin (St Petersburg: Nauka, 1995), pp. 70-90 (p. 84). See also E. Kasatkina, '"Prekrashchenie vechnosti vremeni" ili Strashnyi Sud v kotlovane (Apokalipticheskaia tema v povesti "Kotlovan")', in *'Strana filosofov' Andreia Platonova: Problemy tvorchestva*, vol 2, ed. by N.V. Kornienko (Moscow: Nasledie, 1995), pp. 181-190.

['пространство и время замерзли бы <...> человек ухаживал бы за райским садом <...> До чего бы все это надоело человеку!'].[119] Moreover, the senselessness of language driving narrative and dialogue justifies Brodsky's view that paradise is 'the logical end of human thought', and underlines the difficulty – without a religious basis – of pursuing a line of thought from time into timelessness. Writing during a period dominated by a recent point of historical resolution, Platonov surveys post-apocalyptic time with the atheistic logic of Marxism, based on material existence within the cyclical laws of nature. He thereby identifies an inconsistency in the Revolution's self-mythologization as the absolute end of an objective historical process, while it did away with the *deus ex machina* on which such a claim could only be founded.

Despite the correlations with Kermode's theory, it would be misleading to claim that Platonov shares the philosophical agenda Kermode imputes to the major figures of Western modernism. The ambivalent relationship of idealism and irony in *Chevengur* suggests approaching with some caution Jurij Striedter's assessment that a combination of lyrical and satirical modes in such utopian novels necessarily favours the ironic, and certainly discourages us from reading it as a confident deconstruction of the Russian Idea.[120] Although the dangers of the Chevengurians' maximalism are clearly spelt out in the various acts of violence conducted to clear the path to the End, Platonov sooner laments the crumbling of absolutes than celebrates liberation from them. Revealing the flaws of 'mythical thinking' comes at a high price, and the tragic ramifications of Platonov's intellectual engagement with materialism are difficult to overstate. One imagines that these conclusions were likewise personally painful to the author, for the novel's polyphonic juggling of optimism and pessimism reflects Platonov's philosophical journey of the preceding decade. As Thomas Seifrid writes, Platonov's vision

> ironically conflates the Christian-idealist notion of perishable flesh, which is usually held up as evidence for the soul's transcendence (the flesh passes away, but the soul does not), with the materialist conviction that spirit is subordinate to matter. <...> What makes this distribution of ontological values so tragic is the belief that the alien

[119] Evgenii Zamiatin, 'Rai', in his *Ia boius': Literaturnaia kritika, publitsistika, vospominaniia*, (Moscow: Nasledie, 1999), pp. 53-59 (p. 59).
[120] Jurij Striedter, 'Three Postrevolutionary Utopian Novels', in *The Russian Novel from Pushkin to Pasternak*, ed. by John Garrard (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), pp. 177-201 (p. 197).

> matter of the body is itself but a frail substance subject to the destructive "laws of matter."[121]

Platonov recognizes that matter and 'spirit' (or some part of consciousness which aspires to be independent of matter) coexist in human beings, as do end-orientated and recurring time, and dreams of heaven are bound to the earth. Grappling between an impossible paradise and unbearable reality, *Chevengur*'s unusual form expresses both what Brodsky terms 'surrealism as philosophical madness' and an existentialist sympathy which partly validates that folly.[122]

[121] Seifrid, p. 108.
[122] Brodsky, p. 289.

Chapter Five – A Bifurcation of End-Feeling: Zoshchenko's *Before Sunrise*

Thomas Seifrid writes:

> Whereas the *Proletkul't* movement whose ideas so influenced him [Platonov] had occupied something of a utopian fringe in early Soviet culture, and the campaign for electrification had proceeded under the moderate auspices of NEP, the 'socialist construction' of Stalin's 'second revolution' reincorporated utopian aims and language as part of 'official' Soviet culture.[1]

The projects to complete Bolshevik transformation of society in the 1930s were thus accompanied by a state-led resurgence in utopianism rhetoric, proclaiming 'великий перелом' [a great break] and 'большой прыжок' and [a great leap forward] in time.[2] *Before Sunrise* was published in 1943 but, as Mikhail Zoshchenko's cherished project, worked upon for eight years and envisaged earlier still, is in many ways a product of the 1930s.[3] It therefore belongs, unlike *Red Cavalry* and *Chevengur*, to a context in which a view of the Revolution as the culmination of history was effectively prescribed.

Of our three case-study writers, Zoshchenko began his career most distanced from such narratives of Russia's historical experience. His immensely popular stories of the early 1920s are concerned neither with enacting nor representing a transformation of the world, but serve to comically expose the continuity of human foibles in the new society. As time passed the serious intentions beneath the humour of those short stories came to the fore in longer and less ironic works, such as 'Liudi' ['People'] (written as early as 1924) and *Vozvrashchennaia molodost'* [*Youth Restored*], 1933, which explore mankind's deficiencies and the possibility of regeneration.[4]

Before Sunrise is Zoshchenko's most ambitious and significant work of this later phase. On the surface it does not obviously engage with Russian messianic discourse. It is the autobiographical narrative of Zoshchenko's search for the source

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[1] Thomas Seifrid, *Andrei Platonov: Uncertainties of Spirit* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 133.
[2] See Mikhail Geller, *Andrei Platonov v poiskakh schast'ia* (Paris: YMCA, 1982), p. 253.
[3] Mikhail Zoshchenko, *Pered voskhodom solntsa*, ed. by Vera von Wiren (New York: Izdatel'stvo imeni Chekhova, 1973), pp. 35, 313.
[4] Mikhail Zoshchenko, *Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh*, ed. by D.A. Granin et al. (Leningrad: Khudozhestvennaia literature, 1986), III, 99-160, and II, 58-88.

of his melancholy and his subsequent recovery. It was hardly a secret that the most successful comic writer of the 1920s had been prone to sometimes debilitating depression. Kornei Chukovskii recounts how a gathering of humorists comprising himself, Kol'tsov, Il'f and Petrov was overcome by Zoshchenko's gloom. Il'f or Petrov remarked afterwards, 'Даже улыбнуться и невозможно в присутствии такого страдальца.' [Even to smile in the presence of such a sufferer is impossible.][5]

Despite this apparently narrow thematic focus, *Before Sunrise* aligns itself with our paradigm by associating his individual, existential condition with the ideological and moral state of society. Rather like the early stories, it presents the image of an imperfect human out of step with a supposedly perfected society. Zoshchenko's narrative span, across his personal healthy present and sick past, is intertwined with one registering the contrasting values of present and past Russia. The result is a snapshot of the shift as the nation moves from a discourse of crisis and looming transcendence to a celebration of present achievements stemming from the Revolution, and from a religious conception of paradise to an atheistic one of the perfect society. *Before Sunrise* is thus partly a dialogue between the 'official utopianism' of High Stalinism and the modernist, apocalyptic world of Zoshchenko's youth in the 1910s and 1920s.

This dialogical aspect is reflected in the structure of the work. Rather like *Chevengur*, *Before Sunrise* can be broadly divided into two parts: a searching, pre-transcendent phase, and one assessing the situation after resolution. More generally, it contains a great plurality of voices (the narratorial one in different modes and at different time-points, numerous quotations and autobiographical dialogues), and juxtaposes thematically and temporally disparate narrative units. The resultant formal complexity lends itself to the overarching criteria of this thesis.

This chapter will explore how Zoshchenko understands the personal and social transformations proclaimed in the text and how he depicts the resulting state of resolution. As in the previous chapters, this issue will be approached with an emphasis on the effect of structural fragmentation, and therefore the extent to which

[5] Kornei Chukovskii, 'Iz vospominanii', in *Mikhail Zoshchenko v vospominaniiakh sovremennikov*, ed. by A. Smolian and N. Iurgeneva (Moskva: Sovetskii pisatel', 1981), pp. 13-66 (pp. 55-56).

Before Sunrise responds to our descriptive-polyphonic and transformative-spatial models.

Sincerity versus Irony

An issue which is not in itself fundamental to this analysis, yet is impossible to ignore because it affects our basic comprehension of the work, is that of narratorial reliability. It is also important for the specific reason that it informs our view of whether the text sincerely endorses the Stalinist myth of historical resolution or, perhaps along the lines of Kermode's argument, subverts it. As we will see, the *heteroglossia* and formal complexity give rise to certain ambiguities, which perhaps remind the reader of Zoshchenko's aptitude for exploiting the distance between author and first-person narrator.

When dealing with *Before Sunrise*, it is necessary to take into account a context of increased political intrusion, as inescapable as it was unmentionable. Since the completion of – and failure to publish – *Chevengur* many writers (including Pil'niak and Babel') had gone to their deaths, and the state now demanded ideological, thematic and stylistic conformity to a prescribed template in literature. Given a situation where disobedience was severely punishable, the reader ought to be more sensitive to any failure to satisfy those demands than to compliance with them.

In the heroic age of Socialist Realism, talking about soul-sickness was anachronistic and precarious, as confirmed by the hostile reception to *Before Sunrise*. 'Повесть Зощенко чужда чувствам нашего народа' [Zoshchenko's novella is alien to the feelings of our people], fumed the offended readers Gorshkov, Vaulin, Rutkovskaia and Bol'shakov.[6] The sinister voice of Andrei Zhdanov concurred: since the Revolution 'никто в Советском Союзе не имеет право быть ипохондриком, ни быть психически слабым' [no-one in the Soviet Union has the right to be a hypochondriac, nor to be psychologically weak].[7] The journal *Oktiabr'*

[6] V. Gorshok et al., 'Ob odnoi vrednoi povesti', *Bolshevik*, 2 (1944), 56-58 (p. 56).
[7] Cited in Vera von Wiren, 'Sud'ba *Pered voskhodom solntsa*: Freid ili Pavlov?', in Mikhail Zoshchenko, *Pered voskhodom solntsa*, ed. by Vera von Wiren (New York: Izdatel'stvo imeni Chekhova, 1973), pp. 15-32 (p. 17).

discontinued its publication of the work, thus, ironically, denying its readers Zoshchenko's loyal and happy ending.[8]

The author seems to have been aware that his subject required justification. He constructs a variety of interpretive frames, some of which serve to relate the work to acceptable purposes, while those that are not are bound to the past existence of the narrator. A brief synopsis of structure of *Before Sunrise* illustrates this. The foreword sets out the purpose of the book in the context of the Second World War, namely that it demonstrates the supremacy of reason over fascism's regression to barbarism.[9] This is followed by a prologue relating the book's genesis. A dialogue with a 'remarkable physiologist' reveals a second, instructive intention: to tell people how the author's depression was overcome by scientific means.[10]

In chapter two, entitled 'Ia neschasten – i ne znaiu pochemu' ['I am Wretched and Know Not Why'], the tone abruptly changes, as the basic emotional problem comes into focus and the narrative of Zoshchenko's illness begins:

> Когда я вспоминаю свои молодые годы, я порожаюсь, как много было у меня горя, ненужных тревог и тоски.[11]
> [When I recollect my youthful years, I am amazed how much grief, unnecessary anxieties and anguish I had.]

Here the narrator speaks about that malaise and the ineffectual prescribed cures he took in the south. In this chapter comes the first indication of the context of existential anxieties. We learn that he initially attributed his condition to the 'higher consciousness' of the pessimistic creative soul, a notion that he notes was widespread at a time when otherworldliness was admired:

> в мое время грусть считалась признаком мыслящего человека. В моей среде уважались люди задумчивые, меланхоличные и даже как бы отрешенные от жизни.[12]
> [in my time sadness was considered the sign of a thinking person. In my milieu people who were pensive, melancholy and even estranged from life were respected.]

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[8] *Oktiabr'*, 6-7 and 8-9 (1943). The lost second half disappeared for nearly thirty years before being published separately under the title 'Povest' o razume' ['Novella About Reason'] in *Zvezda*, 3 (1972). This corresponds to chapters seven to thirteen, the epilogue and afterword of the current text. *Before Sunrise* was first published as a whole in the 1973 New York edition.
[9] Zoshchenko, *Pered voskhodom solntsa*, p. 36.
[10] Ibid., pp. 38-40.
[11] Ibid., p. 41.
[12] Ibid., p. 42.

To illustrate this notion that melancholy is the natural plight of those most sensitive to the world, he reproduces relevant excerpts from the diaries and letters of figures such as Tolstoi, Chopin and Poe. Although he describes how a meeting with a thoroughly boorish youth suffering from the very same symptoms disabused him of that view, the error is thus lent a certain resonance.[13] As his state worsened, Zoshchenko came to believe that some traumatic event in his life had triggered his mental problems, and he decided to seek that cause. This introduces yet another context: psychoanalysis.

Chapters three, four and the first half of five present the raw data of this search. Apart from opening and closing commentaries, these chapters consist of a series of autobiographical fragments in a markedly more fictional, literary style. They dramatize moments and episodes from the narrator's life between infancy and youth, and are ostensibly presented according to the random order of the narrator's recollection, spiralling into the past as he searches for an event which triggered his problems. This is the dramatic kernel of *Before Sunrise*. It is startlingly frank about the author's erstwhile depression and amorality, and it is the section where existential anxieties come to the fore. This part of the book is also the one to which the theory of spatial form is most applicable.

Chapter five arrives at Zoshchenko's pre-conscious memories and launches into a diagnosis based on the discoveries of Pavlov. The next four chapters represent a gradual 'dawning of consciousness' based on the exegesis of dreams and of the fragments in chapters three to five, eventually revealing the irrational associations forged in his infant mind. Having understood the mistakes of his subconscious, the author is cured. Meanwhile, in discussing the old world and its literature, the narrator again seems to imply that the unfairness and philosophical pessimism of that epoch served to confirm his subconscious mistakes.

The remaining chapters, ten to thirteen, extract broader conclusions from the Zoshchenko experiment. There are attempts to analyze the cases of some of the eminent figures mentioned in the second chapter, and there is speculation about the further potential of reason and science. *Before Sunrise* then closes with an epilogue and afterword, symmetrically echoing the foreword and prologue at the beginning.

[13] Ibid., p. 44.

The stratification of contexts renders the work as a whole more heterogeneous and less convincing than it might have been, and this raises the possibility of a subversive relationship to its official message.

This structural and contextual complexity is emphasized by the work's generic vagueness. It is hard to call *Before Sunrise* a novel, despite its constant hero-narrator describing his journey from stricken youth to happy maturity, because much of the work is non-literary – scientific, psychoanalytical – in style and intention. This facilitates the breaking of taboos for fiction. Unacceptable existential anxieties can be discussed as symptoms of a psychological illness from which the author has recovered. In addition, Zoshchenko is enabled to diverge from the stylistic laws of Socialist Realism. His non-fictional subject permits him to create a text of such 'formalist' complexity on various levels – Irene Masing-Delic regards it as a latter-day manifestation of the Symbolist *Allkunstwerk* ideal – that would not be tolerated in 'literature'.[14]

On the other hand, our Zoshchenko-narrator repeatedly affirms his identity as a writer, and even declares, 'Это будет литературное произведение' [It will be a literary work], when the physiologist asks, 'Это будет трактат или роман?' [Will it be a treatise or a novel?][15] This suggests that the book should be read with sensitivity to linguistic and literary effect, as well as to the relationship between the various registers and genres deployed.

The question of narratorial reliability has been surprisingly neglected by the commentators, despite the variety of responses to *Before Sunrise*. Tastes diverge on Zoshchenko's later writing. *Before Sunrise* has been seen by critics such as Linda Hart Scatton (who traces a consistent development throughout his career) and Aleksandr Zholkovskii as perhaps the culmination and key to Zoshchenko's work, though this is naturally disputed by champions, like Jeremy Hicks, of the earlier stories, who judge the later work as didactic and artistically unsuccessful.[16]

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[14] Irene Masing-Delic, 'Biology, Reason and Literature in Zoshchenko's *Pered voskhodom solntsa*', *Russian Literature*, 8 (1980), 77-101 (p. 95).
[15] Zoshchenko, *Pered voskhodom solntsa*, p. 38.
[16] See Aleksandr Zholkovskii, *Mikhail Zoshchenko: Poetika nedoveriia* (Moscow: Iazyki russkoi kul'tury, 1999); Linda Hart Scatton, *Mikhail Zoshchenko: Evolution of a Writer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Jeremy Hicks, *Mikhail Zoshchenko and the Poetics of Skaz*

Both camps are broadly united in believing in the ingenuousness of *Before Sunrise*. The author 'demands to be taken at face value,' according to Scatton. 'The whole book is most definitely sincere.'[17] Many critics note problems inherent in the structure and consider the process and methods of Zoshchenko's cure unclear, yet tend nevertheless to concur with Scatton's verdict. Although Hugh McLean identifies certain phrases redolent of the 'familiar Zoshchenko irony' and despite his scepticism about the happy ending, he 'no longer caught glimpses of the author smirking behind his mask' and states that 'this is one work by Zoshchenko that can be taken straight'.[18] R.A. Donmar describes *Before Sunrise* both as 'cryptic' and as one of Zoshchenko's 'most avowedly didactic works'.[19] Like Scatton, Gary Kern, A.B. Murphy and Krista Hanson find the narrative unreliable but accept that the author sincerely believes in it. A number of psychoanalytically-inclined critics (encouraged perhaps by Zoshchenko's lead to have a go themselves) have imputed the text's ambiguities onto the author's subconscious. Having commented that the work's haphazard chronology is misleading given that the author worked on *Before Sunrise* for nearly ten years, Kern makes the surprising statement that 'unconsciously <...> he attempts to create his own myth, to give his life a meaningful pattern.'[20] Hanson even writes of an 'unconscious awareness that political and social change <...> do not eliminate negative human character traits.'[21]

The widespread assumption of the author's personal innocence in comparison with his text perhaps reflects the influence of contemporary accounts. In 1928,

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(Nottingham: Astra, 2000). Hicks declares that the 'pernicious tendency' of 'interpretation reaches its apogee in Zoshchenko's work with *Before Sunrise*. Here evidence is dovetailed to fit the predetermined interpretive framework. <...> [His] claims are counterbalanced with none of the qualifications or conflicting evidence we saw in Zoshchenko's early work. In the short stories of the 1920s there was often an irony at the expense of psychological accounts of human existence. Where there was once an ambivalence that left the reader in a state of uncertainty, full of questions, there is now clarity, a definitive answer presenting itself as an end to all questions.' Hicks, p. 167.

[17] Scatton, p 217.

[18] See Hugh McLean, 'Zoshchenko's Unfinished Novel: *Before Sunrise*', *Survey*, 36 (1961), 99-105 (pp. 100, 107), and Hugh McLean, 'Belated Sunrise', *Slavic and East European Journal*, 18.4 (1974), 406-10 (pp. 409, 407).

[19] R.A. Donmar, 'The Tragedy of a Soviet Satirist: The Case of Zoshchenko', in *Through the Glass of Soviet Literature*, ed. by E. J. Simmons (New York, 1953), pp. 201-43 (pp. 236, 240).

[20] Gary Kern, 'After the Afterword: The Genesis, Art and Theory of *Before Sunrise*', in Mikhail Zoshchenko, *Before* Sunrise, trans. by Kern (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1974), pp. 345-66 (p. 363).

[21] Krista Hanson, 'Kto vinovat? Guilt and Rebellion in Zoshchenko's Accounts of Childhood', in *Russian Literature and Psychoanalysis*, ed. by D. Rancour-Laferriere (Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamin, 1989), pp. 285-302 (p 287).

Zoshchenko wrote to Slonimskii that he was attracted to writing more lyrically, and Chukovskii claimed that Zoshchenko detested the 'sick' pessimism inherent in his irony.[22] Judging by the frequency of its citation, Nadezhda Mandel'shtam's slightly condescending verdict that Zoshchenko was a 'pure and wonderful man, <...> completely without cynicism <...> because he believed piously in progress' has also exercised a certain authority.[23] A reluctance to identify irony in the text is also understandable in the context of the gravity and earnestness of certain passages in *Before Sunrise*. It is certainly not satirical in the way that the stories of the twenties were.

However, as a result, scholarship has somewhat neglected the poetics and the subtleties of signification in *Before Sunrise*, and perhaps devoted too much attention to elaborating contexts surrounding the official argument, such as focussing on Zoshchenko's amateur psychology and his misrepresentation of Freud – interesting subjects in themselves, though perhaps not literary ones.[24]

There are some exceptions to this tendency. Cathy Popkin sets Nadezhda Mandel'shtam's view of Zoshchenko against the possibility that his accommodation with the authorities was strategic.[25] Rachel May's reading accepts a larger element of irony in *Before Sunrise* than previous commentaries and points out certain similarities with the *skaz* narrators of the 1920s, and Aleksandr Zholkovskii reveals how Zoshchenko's early and later oeuvres contextualize one another.[26] Meanwhile, Scatton charts the work's diversity of registers, noting the author's stylistic

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[22] There was a certain time 'когда мне стыдно было говорить лирические вещи. Я понемножку приду к ним опять' [when I was ashamed to say lyrical things. Some time I'll come back a little to them]. See Boris Filippov, 'Opal'noe proizvedenie', in Mikhail Zoshchenko, *Pered voskhodom solntsa* (New York: Mezhdunarodnoe Literaturnoe Sodruzhestvo, 1967), pp. 13-33 (p. 24). Chukovskii is quoted by Krista Hanson, 'Autobiography and Conversion: Zoshchenko's *Before Sunrise*', in *Autobiographical Statements in Twentieth-Century Russian Literature*, ed. by Jane Gray Harris (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 133-53 (p. 136).

[23] Hanson, 'Kto vinovat', p. 287.

[24] See Wiren, 'Sud'ba'; Vera von Wiren-Garczynski, 'Mikhail Zoshchenko – avtor psikhoanaliticheskikh povestei', in Mikhail Zoshchenko, *Pered voskhodom solntsa* (New York: Mezhdunarodnoe Literaturnoe Sodruzhestvo, 1967), pp. 5-11; Irene Masing-Delic, 'Zoshchenko – Pavlovian, Freudian or Fedorovian?', in *Slavic Symposium 1982* (Johannesburg, 1983), pp. 140-59; and Thomas P. Hodge, 'Freudian Elements in Zoshchenko's *Pered voskhodom solntsa* (1943)', *Slavonic and East European Review*, 67.1 (1989), 1-28.

[25] Cathy Popkin, *The Pragmatics of Insignificance: Chekhov, Zoshchenko, Gogol* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 240.

[26] Rachel May, 'Superego as Literary Subtext: Story and Structure in Mikhail Zoshchenko's *Before Sunrise*', *Slavic Review*, 55.1 (1996), 106-124; Zholkovskii, *Poetika nedoveriia*, and especially Aleksandr Zholkovskii, 'K pereosmysleniiu kanona: Sovetskie klassiki-nonkonformisty v postsovetskoi perspektive', *Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie*, 29 (1998), 55-68.

virtuosity in each of them.[27] Marietta Chudakova's pioneering work on Zoshchenko's poetics portrays this engagement with various styles as a continuation of the author's aspiration to create new genres, stripped of bourgeois literariness, appropriate to the new world.[28] Masing-Delic, on the other hand, engages with Zoshchenko's narrator as a literary protagonist with similarities to Evgenii from *The Bronze Horseman*, and probes the work's modernist (and specifically Symbolist) intertexts.[29] May similarly comments upon modernist aspects of the work.[30] Yet these studies do not redress the lacuna in scholarship about the stylistic and ideological aspects of Silver Age modernism that linger in this masterpiece of literature in the Stalinist period.

Existential Contexts

Chapters three to five of *Before Sunrise* are palpably distinct from the rest of the work: in structure, their fictionality and lyricism of style, and dramatic intensity. In the context of this thesis, they demand to be examined in isolation, because they constitute the 'modernist-fragmented' section of the work which most obviously responds to our overarching paradigm. These chapters present one hundred and thirteen autobiographical vignettes recollected as the narrator searches for the roots of his unhappiness. Contiguous fragments are not narratologically connected and they are related in time only insofar as they are organized according to age-spans, which successively spiral into the past. The text is consequently comparable with examples discussed in previous chapters, where a plurality of fragments unconnected in time exceeds any sense of linear continuity. The following section will explore how far that fragmented texture can be understood as a spatial text, and whether the juxtaposition of non-consequential instants can be regarded as a modernist reorganization or even transcendence of time.

Before that it is helpful to examine the content (which, as ever, strongly influences our perception of form) and specifically the terms in which the purpose and process of the narrator's journey into memory are related. As with *Chevengur*, the structure of these chapters is generated by an existential search for happiness, although

[27] Scatton, p. 212.
[28] Marietta Chudakova, *Poetika Mikhaila Zoshchenko* (Moscow: Nauka, 1978).
[29] Masing-Delic, 'Biology', pp. 92, 95.
[30] May, p. 112.

Platonov's protagonists seek a future End, while Zoshchenko's stimulus is the hope of finding a cause of his unhappiness somewhere in the past. In the course of this interior journey, the text hints at modernist anxieties nurtured in the vacuum of faith. Recurring narrative situations suggest philosophical contexts to Zoshchenko's malaise, and his imagery imparts a religious dimension to unsatisfied needs. These subtexts encourage us to question whether this text-within-a-text attempts to resolve existential problems aesthetically, as seen in Babel' and described by Frank.

Among the scenes the narrator recalls in search of the root of his depression – including several moments themselves of intense anguish – are a large number that present confrontations with humanity's material or biological existence. A repeated motif is behaviour determined by animalistic urges, among which sexual attraction is particularly prominent. Zoshchenko candidly narrates incidents from his extra-marital affairs, which he pursues with indifference and which fail to abate his unhappiness. They apparently have little to do with volition. In the fragment 'Ia sam vinovat' ['It's My Own Fault'] Zoshchenko's lover K. even denies culpability for her infidelity on the basis that she was unable to disobey her sexual urge.[31] Aroused by the narrator's kisses but with no place to go, she visits another lover with the luxury of a free flat. The sexual theme also runs through the childhood recollections. There are vague stirrings of attraction toward females, his father's marital infidelities are suggested through the child's-eye view, and the narrator watches with shame as his mother returns home late in a feather boa.[32]

The notion that natural instincts are more powerful than free will is reinforced by parallels with the animal world.[33] In the fragment 'Zveri' ['Beasts'] the adult narrator goes to Leningrad's zoo. He sees a tiger and dog who have been inseparable since the latter acted as foster mother to the former, then watches two bears attack their offspring (which has disturbed their cage), eventually ripping off its forearms, and then proceed to copulate. He muses, 'Я начинаю понимать, что такое звери. И в чем у них разница с людьми.'[34] [I begin to understand what

[31] Zoshchenko, *Pered voskhodom solntsa*, pp. 103-05.
[32] Ibid., p. 139.
[33] This motif comparing human and animal behaviour features in other contemporary works by Zoshchenko, such as 'Pchely i liudi' ['Bees and People'] (1941) and the ill-fated 'Prikliucheniia obez'iany' ['Adventures of a Monkey'] (1945). See Zoshchenko, *Sobranie sochinenii v trekh tomakh*, II, 344-49, and Mikhail Zoshchenko, *Izbrannoe* (Ann Arbor, MI: Ardis, 1960), pp. 316-24.
[34] Zoshchenko, *Pered voskhodom solntsa*, p 110.

beasts are. And what the difference between them and people is.] This conclusion is ambiguous, given the contrasting sights, but also in the light of comparisons with human behaviour. Masing-Delic has pointed out the allegorical relationship between 'Beasts' and the later recollection 'V masterskoi' ['In the Studio'], where the child-narrator's presence prevents his parents' full reconciliation, as a result of which he is reproved by his mother.[35] In another childhood fragment, the narrator's mother exhibits a bestial reflex of rage when a cyclist accidentally collides with him. Later, while comforting the little Zoshchenko, she states that she ought to have torn the cyclist's head off.[36] Masing-Delic correctly notes that both the mother's nursing and her neglect are 'biologically conditioned, not the result of a conscious moral choice': a dog's love and a bear's fury.[37]

The association of human and animal is particularly strong in relation to the portraits of infant experience. There is a succession of childhood pictures of animals: he liberates goldfish from their water and innocently watches them wriggling to death, is taken to the zoo, and is frightened by dogs.[38] Since these episodes occur when the narrator's own consciousness is relatively undeveloped, one infers a commonality between the child and animal. Indeed, the narrator explicitly refers to himself as: 'маленькое животное, не умеющее говорить, не умеющее думать' [a little animal, unable to speak, unable to think].[39]

The pre-conscious fragments of the fifth chapter, itself entitled 'Before Sunrise', are flashes of time, dominated by instinctive reflexes:

> На подоконнике цветы. Среди цветов лежит кошка. Она посматривает на меня.
> А я посматриваю на кошку. И сам сижу на высоком стуле. И ем кашу.
> Вдруг подходит большая собака. Она кладет лапы на стол.
> Я отчаянно реву.
> Кто-то кричит:
> – Он боится собак. Прогоните ее!
> Собаку прогоняют.
> Посматривая на кошку, я ем кашу.[40]
> [There are flowers on the windowsill. A cat is lying among the flowers. It is looking at me. And I am looking at the cat. I am sitting on a high chair. And eating porridge.
> Suddenly a large dog approaches. It puts its paws on the table.

[35] Masing-Delic, 'Biology', pp. 83-84.
[36] Zoshchenko, *Pered voskhodom solntsa*, p. 121.
[37] Masing-Delic, 'Biology', p. 84.
[38] Zoshchenko, *Pered voskhodom solntsa*, pp. 121, 122, 124, 126.
[39] Ibid., p. 165.
[40] Ibid., p. 163.

I howl despairingly.
Someone shouts:
'He's afraid of dogs. Shoo her away!'
They shoo off the dog.
Looking at the cat, I eat porridge.]

This short text is somewhat disturbing in its lucid depiction of a human experience devoid of conscious reflection. We know that no sophisticated, verbal thought process corresponds to the words on the page. The fear of the dog is arbitrary and the crying out an unconsidered reflex. The narrator is restricted to looking, eating and howling, and these parameters encourage comparison with the animals in the scene. Indeed, his mutual contemplation with the cat (with whom there is an implied complicity in relation to the dog) emphasizes our sense that they share a basic level of cognition, which is alien to the adult mind. Penetrating still further back into his pre-conscious memories, the fleeting and chaotic results are nightmarish in their abstract meaninglessness.

> Какая-то рука из стены. Высокая колеблющаяся тень. Еще тень. Какая-то белая пена. И снова длинная колеблющаяся тень.[41]
> [Some arm out of the wall. A tall, flickering shadow. Another shadow. Some kind of white froth. Again a long, flickering shadow.]

If the oblivion of unconscious aspects of existence haunts the text, then so does that of death. The fragments record several deaths – those of Zoshchenko's parents, an uncle, a student suicide, a drowning, a murder, the war – in addition to the fear of death: the young narrator flees from a rabid dog, hides from a herd of cows up a tree, and prematurely announces his sister's disappearance on the river to be her demise. The narrator's more vague, existential anxiety perhaps also fundamentally stems from his fear of death. As May points out, a large number of the fragments conclude with the motif of flight ('I leave', 'I'll change my job', 'I go outside') which is the animal instinct governed by a perception of peril.[42]

In any case, the adult narrator finds it hard to accept the fact of mortality. In the fragment 'Khorosho' ['Good'] the narrator, debilitated by anxiety, cannot understand how a decrepit old man can appear so peacefully content with surely less than a year to live.[43] At the tragic climax of the work (an episode in chapter six,

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[41] Ibid., p. 167.
[42] May, p. 113.
[43] Zoshchenko, *Pered voskhodom solntsa*, pp. 114-15.

in the style of the recollections but chronologically belonging to the period of self-analysis) the narrator visits his childhood dacha resort on the Neva and seeks old acquaintances there:

> я назвал несколько фамилий тех деревенских жителей, о которых я вспомнил. Нет, все эти фамилии принадлежали уже умершим людям.
> Тогда я назвал свою фамилию, фамилию моих родителей. И женщина заулыбалась. Она сказала, что она тогда была совсем молодой девушкой, но она отлично помнит моих покойных родителей. И тогда она стала называть фамилии наших родственников, живших здесь, фамилии знакомых. Нет, все названные фамилии также принадлежали умершим людям.
> С грустью я возвращался к своей лодке.
> <...> Прежние [обитатели] пожили здесь, как гости, и ушли, исчезли, чтобы никогда не вернуться. Они умерли.[44]
> [I mentioned several of the surnames of the inhabitants of the village whom I recalled. No, all these names already belonged to dead people.
> Then I mentioned my own surname, the surname of my parents. And the woman smiled. She said that she had been a very small girl back then, but she clearly remembered my deceased parents. And then she began naming our relatives, who had lived here, and naming our friends. No, all these names also belonged to dead people.
> With sadness I went back toward my boat.
> <...> The former inhabitants lived here for a while, like guests, and departed, never to return. They died.]

This most conscious confrontation with mortality and the burden of memory is ascribed with great significance: 'Мне показалось, что в тот день я понял, что такое жизнь, что такое смерть, и как надо жить.' [It seemed to me that on this day I realized what life is, what death is, and how one should live.][45] Zoshchenko's ferry-crossing of the Neva emphasizes the fact that his recollective journey crosses the boundary of time; the river is thus a kind of Styx that he, like Orpheus, traverses in search of the dead, and from which he returns alone.[46]

The recurrent images of biological determinism and mortality (death being the ultimate limitation imposed by our animal nature) imply that the narrator's plight is associated with an existential horror before materialism. With his 'religious' needs of freedom and permanence unsatisfied, he appears alienated from nature in an archetypically modernist manner. Zoshchenko's situation thus resembles that which Worringer saw as the basis of abstraction in art, and his despair at ephemeralness

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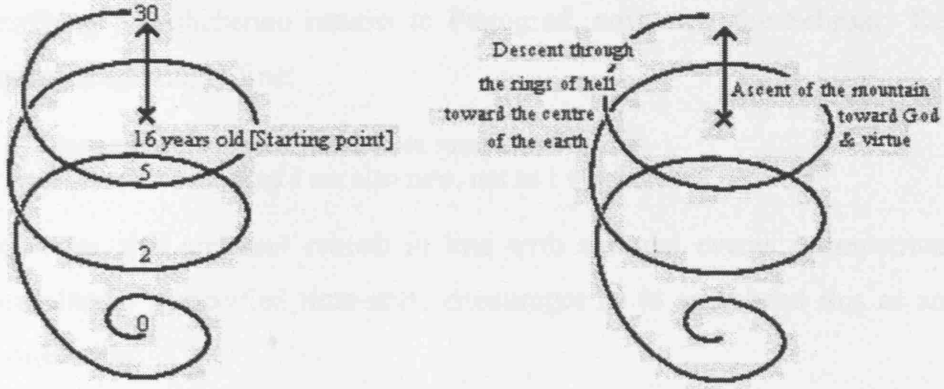
[44] Ibid., pp. 181-82.
[45] Ibid., p 181.
[46] Recalling Masing-Delic's comparison with *The Bronze Horseman*, we note that the narrator's action also parallels Evgenii's search for the dead Parasha. This pattern is replicated in another fragment, in which the narrator rushes to his family on the other side of the river as the floodwaters rise over the city. Ibid., p. 110.

more specifically relates his attitude to time to the premises of Frank's spatial theory. We have seen that to some extent Babel' transfers the functions of his 'retired god' to the artist, whereas for Platonov mankind's material existence is substantially more tragic. Does, then, this part of *Before Sunrise* counterbalance its existential alienation with some kind of aesthetic transcendence? Does Zoshchenko, like Proust – or Orpheus – overcome lost time through art?

The author's use of religious imagery in connection both with his condition and with art encourages us to entertain this possibility. First of all, Zoshchenko's depiction of his former existence can be regarded as a journey through a psychological 'hell' by a narrator who has escaped it and now inhabits a (personally and socially) better world. This Dantean structure of course brings to mind Platonov's Purgatory-Paradise of *Chevengur* and Hell-Purgatory of *The Foundation Pit*, as well as Gogol''s projected trilogy beginning with *Mertvye dushi* [*Dead Souls*]. Zoshchenko's picaresque passage through a world of suffering suggests at least the superficial influence of Dante himself (particularly in the context of the overall shape of *Before Sunrise* and its later imagery, as we will see below). Indeed, the scheme of chapters three to five bears similarities to the *Inferno*, as a chronological (to Dante's spatial) downward spiral. Scatton's diagram of the temporal plan of this section could be adapted as a crude map of the *Inferno*:[47]



Zoshchenko's First World War fragments present the most horrific scenes in the book, and here introduce the image of hell explicitly. In a text itself entitled 'Ad' ['Hell'] he writes:

[47] Scatton, p. 224. NB Scatton incorrectly marks the starting-point as fifteen years old.

> Воздух наполен стоном, воем, визгом и скрежетом. Мне кажется, что я попал в ад.
> Мне казалось, что я был в аду![48]
> [The air was filled with moaning, howling and gnashing of teeth. It seemed to me I had found myself in hell.
> It seemed to me I was in hell!]

In 'Hell' a nonchalant and seemingly invulnerable commander assumes Virgil's role as guide, from whom the narrator takes down dictation – transposed into the subsequent act of writing his story. (In 'Dvadtsatoe iiulia' ['Twentieth of July'] a devastating gas attack, leaving men and birds dead on the grass, is similarly juxtaposed with the act of writing.[49])

The narrator's 'hell' also features several religious reference points of salvation and rebirth, generally presented in a corrupted form. In the story 'Paskhal'naia noch'' ['Easter Night'] the sixteen year-old narrator meets his neighbour Tata T. on the stairwell and they greet each other, 'Христос воскрес!' [Christ is risen!] but what follows (he begins to understand) is 'not a Christian kiss'.[50] There are various other moments where the theme of resurrection is treated ambivalently. The narrator records no joy at life being returned from a suicide attempt and wartime peril. In 'Polk v meshke' ['The Regiment in a Fire Pocket'] an apparently 'dead' village is brought screaming to life by the army's arson: 'мертвая деревня оживает <...> мы слышим крики, плач, и визг' [the dead village comes to life <...> we hear cries, weeping and screams].[51] In 'Ia nichego ne ponimaiu' ['I Don't Understand Anything'] Zoshchenko returns to Petrograd, now after the February Revolution, feeling surprisingly fine:

> Новая Россия. И я – новый, не такой, как был.[52]
> [A new Russia. And I am also new, not as I was before.]

However, this apparent rebirth in line with national events is impermanent, and Zoshchenko's specified time-scale encourages us to apprehend this as an inverted resurrection:

> Два дня я чувствую себя прекрасно. На *третий день* у меня снова хандра, снова перебой сердца, мрак и меланхолия.[53]

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[48] Zoshchenko, *Pered voskhodom solntsa*, pp. 71-72.
[49] Ibid., p. 76.
[50] Ibid., p. 55.
[51] Ibid., p. 68.
[52] Ibid., p. 78.
[53] Ibid., p. 79. Italics added.

> [The first two days I feel wonderful. On the *third day* I again have anguish, again an irregular heartbeat, gloom and melancholy].

Symbols of spiritual suffering also pervade Zoshchenko's depictions of artists, which recollects the (previously rejected) assumption about 'higher consciousness'. Moreover, by relating the central, existential problems to art, the author invites questions about the role of art in resolving them. Among several portraits of fellow writers, particular attention is given to a fastidious and gloomy Maiakovskii, an alcoholic Esenin (both of whom, of course, had committed suicide since then) and Blok, shortly before his own death, of whom is observed:[54]

> Я никогда не видел таких пустых, мертвых глаз. Я никогда не думал, что на лице могут отражаться такая тоска и такое безразличие.
> [I have never seen such empty, dead eyes. I have never thought that a face could reflect such anguished yearning and such indifference.]

Zoshchenko clearly identifies Blok's shocking countenance with his own state:

> Я снова хожу по коридору. Меня душит какое-то волнение. Теперь я почти вижу свою судьбу. Я вижу финал своей жизни. Я вижу тоску, которая меня непременно задушит.[55]
> [I again walk along the corridor. A feeling of agitation suffocates me. Now I can almost see my fate. I see the finale of my life. I see anguish, which will suffocate me without fail.]

Of all the writers referred to in *Before Sunrise*, Blok is the most prominent. There are several quotations from his verse: the fourth chapter borrows the title of Blok's collection *Strashnyi mir* [*Terrible World*], and that of the sixth, 'Chernaia voda' ['Black Water'], derives from the *Terrible World* poem 'Staryi, staryi son' ['Old, old dream'], which supplies an epigraph.[56] In the fragment following Zoshchenko's encounter with Blok, the narrator sits in the significantly named establishment 'Кафе «Двенадцать»' [Café "Twelve"], and murmurs Blok's poem 'Kak rastet trevoga k nochi!' ['How anxiety grows at nightfall!'], once again from *Terrible World*. Masing-Delic notes that the fragmented section of *Before Sunrise* shares the mood of heartache and chaos of Blok's collection.[57] Indeed, the imagery of 'Old,

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[54] Ibid., pp. 95-97, 98-99, 102-03, 108-09. The other notable portrait is of Gor'kii, exceptional in his sanity. Not impressing the narrator much during that meeting, Gor'kii can be regarded as an emblem of the ideal toward which *Before Sunrise* will later move, yet is still estranged from.
[55] Ibid., p. 96.
[56] Aleksandr Blok, *Izbrannye sochineniia*, ed. by A. Turkov (Moscow: Khudozhestvennaia literatura, 1988), p. 313.
[57] Masing-Delic, 'Biology', p. 95. Masing-Delic refers specifically to the sub-section 'Pliaski smerti' ['Dances of Death'] from which 'Old, old dream' derives.

old dream' – flitting shadows, dreams, dark waters representing death and oblivion – strongly resonates with *Before Sunrise*, and particularly its encounter with pre-conscious memories and the unconscious mind.

It is apt to Zoshchenko's condition that Blok is represented in connection with his most troubled periods: by verse dating from the 'crisis of Symbolism' and his post-Revolutionary exhaustion. However, Blok is also the brightest emblem of the messianic aspiration of the Silver Age to transcend earthly existential limitations through poetic vision. In this context, we might wonder whether Zoshchenko sees the unhappy Maiakovskii, Esenin, and Blok in terms of suffering leading to an art that is in some way redemptive or transcendent. This thought colours one's understanding of the fragment depicting the death of Zoshchenko's father, a painter. His hysterical mother pierces her dead husband's hand with a pin, in case he has not really died. The resultant wound obviously recalls the proof of Christ's resurrection, although in this instance it serves to confirm the father's mortality.[58] Later in the book we meet a poet-beggar who 'был похож на Иисуса Христа' [looked like Jesus Christ].[59]

Considering Zoshchenko's own autobiographical project in this light, we can see that on a superficial level he fictionally 'brings to life' the beloved dead and precious instants of lost time. (The narrator uses the metaphor 'воскресили' [resurrected] about the recollection of one story.)[60] In the contexts of a modern spiritual sickness shared by fellow writers and memories of an apocalyptic world of transcendence and calamity, mediated by the prophetic artist, we can now explore whether the structural patterns of the fragment-chapters suggest any deeper, aesthetic response to the narrator's plight.

Spatial Form in Chapters 3-5

The structure of the three chapters containing autobiographical fragments remind us that the mind is a repository in which temporally disparate memories coexist in

[58] Zoshchenko, *Pered voskhodom solntsa*, p. 146. He is more often portrayed (as in the autobiographically-based *Lelia i Min'ka* [*Lelia and Min'ka*] stories, which Scatton, pp. 140-57, has revealed to be reworkings of biblical parables) as a mediating and punishing patriarchal God, though his unfairness, sporadic indifference, and premature mortality scarcely qualify him for the position.
[59] Zoshchenko, *Pered voskhodom solntsa*, p. 206.
[60] Ibid., p. 248.

simultaneity. Scenes and episodes follow one another in an anti-chronological spiral, basically as charted by Scatton's diagram. More precisely, the structure proceeds from the age of sixteen to thirty years old, then from five to fifteen, then from two to five, and concludes with the narrator's hazy memories from before his second birthday. Yet even the subsections that adhere to chronological order are narratologically unconnected, displaying what May terms 'modernist discontinuity'.[61] Contiguous fragments hardly ever reveal any narrative continuity or development (notable exceptions being the deaths followed by funerals of both Zoshchenko's parents). The impressionist analogy, which Frank makes of Proust and Mochulskii of Belyi, is once again applicable: independent instants of time are set down side by side without transition. As a result of these non-consequential relationships, the period of life depicted in one hundred and thirteen fragments lacks a clear temporal line of development. A few short narrative strands linking fragments are vastly outweighed by the breadth of unconnected episodes. This section of *Before Sunrise* consequently presents time in spatial, rather than linear, form.

However, in order to regard this non-linear restructuring of life as an escape from the tyranny of cause-effect (and perhaps biological determinism) it does not suffice to thus demonstrate its weak temporal coordinates. It is necessary to probe the effect of this structure and its interplay with the thematic contexts discussed above.

An important issue, given that the fragmented section lacks linear narrative coherence, is whether it has other unifying aspects. As we know, the recollections are generated by the common mystery 'I am wretched and know not why'. This motivation in turn gives rise to recurring themes, motifs and narrative situations. For example, a large number of the scenes depict the narrator's depression and 'biological' aspects of life in infant and adult forms: tantrums / indignation, inchoate attraction / love affairs, groundless fear / abstract anxiety. Equivalences between protagonists also reinforce the philosophical pessimism. Zoshchenko, his father and grandfather are all said to have 'закрытое сердце' [a closed heart], and

[61] May, p. 112.

the females depicted can mostly be regarded as stock characters: faithless lovers and neglected wives.[62]

Such thematic repetitions contribute to the sense of timelessness, but also to the impression that the conditions of being remain constant in time. Repeatedly, apparently significant events fail to bring about fundamental change. For example, the title of the fragment 'Novyi put'' ['New Path'] suggests rebirth and recalls the Symbolist journal of the same name. It is indeed the story of a rite of passage (marriage – generally considered a happy event), yet his new incarnation is equivalent to the old one. Zoshchenko has a passive role in the change, and his misery and sickness continue. His new wife is juxtaposed with his recently deceased mother, and the punishing physical exertion of heaving his possessions across the city on a cart cruelly mirrors the previous fragment, where he drags a sledge bearing his mother's coffin.[63]

In this respect, the 'timelessness' of chapters three to five could be seen as a sort of Kermodian rejection of the *Bildungsroman* convention. We could even liken Zoshchenko's vision to Platonov's structural evocation of repetitive, unchanging, senseless natural time in *Chevengur* – although the earlier work is far more conceptually involved with time. While the overarching narrative of the self-analysis and cure later re-imposes linearity, it makes no interpretive intervention during the exposition of the fragments. The presence of the 'cure' supernarrative in the recollections therefore does not constitute a linearly accumulating understanding.

The structure can also be seen to emphasize the themes of transience and mortality. Frank's characterization of Proust might also be applied to Zoshchenko: he presents a 'view of his characters motionless in various moments of vision throughout their lives – units of meaning apprehended as a whole by the reader's sensibility'.[64] Zoshchenko similarly sketches figures at different ages, and the juxtaposition of these fragments in the reader's mind creates double (or multiple) images whose chief tensions reside in the changes wrought by temporal leaps.

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[62] Zoshchenko, *Pered voskhodom solntsa*, pp. 143, 147.
[63] Ibid., pp. 95, 94.
[64] Joseph Frank, 'Spatial Form in Modern Literature', in his *The Widening Gyre* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1963), pp. 3-62 (p. 25).

For example, Nadia V. appears as the narrator's adolescent first love, then as part of an adult love triangle, and ultimately as a married woman, émigrée and sworn enemy of Revolutionary Russia. With each step her youthful diffidence and naïveté erodes. The recollections of the beautiful and predatory Tata T. similarly chart a journey from innocence to experience, this time in the narrator himself. The first fragment depicts her as an inaccessible 'tigress' at her window, who makes a present of chocolate; later the narrator is surprised by the paschal kiss; later still he returns from the front and impresses Tata with his lost shyness.[65] A third example is the contrasting treatment of guilt in the aforementioned 'It's My Own Fault' and the childhood fragment 'Ia ne vinovat' ['It's Not My Fault'].[66] 'It's Not My Fault' narrates a supper-table dispute over a cherished dessert. The child is thus contrasted with his fallen, adult double, and the paternal kiss which ends the text contrasts with the erotic one with which the narrator's later lover silences his indignation and brings that fragment to a close. The non-chronological arrangement of the text affects our reception of this juxtaposition: 'It's My Own Fault' should be a wry echo of the earlier incident, but because 'It's Not My Fault' occurs later in the text, it functions as a moving emblem of a lost innocence.

The passing of time is most dramatically illuminated by juxtapositions which deal with ageing and death. Zoshchenko presents snapshots of his mother from relatively early motherhood to her deathbed; moreover, the spiral structure defamiliarizes (and thus accentuates) this progression by restoring youth after we have witnessed her last breath. A similar effect is derived from the anachrony of depicting the narrator first burying his mother as adult, then his father as child.[67]

The most powerful example of his depiction of a single object either side of an interval in time takes place in the aforementioned 'dacha' scene. The resort is physically almost the same, completely recognizable, but inhabited by different people and seems shrunken to the grown-up narrator:

> Я сразу узнал маленькую круглую часовенку. Она была цела. Я сразу вспомнил избы напротив, деревенскую улицу и крутой подъем с того берега, где когда-то была пристань.

[65] Zoshchenko, *Pered voskhodom solntsa*, pp. 52, 55-56, 74.
[66] Ibid., pp. 131-32.
[67] Ibid., pp. 94, 146-47.

> Все теперь казалось жалким, миниатюрным в сравнении с тем грандиозным миром, который остался в моей памяти.
> Я шел по улице, и все здесь до боли мне было знакомо. Кроме людей.[68]
> [I immediately recognized the small, circular chapel. It was intact. I immediately recalled the wooden huts opposite, the village street and the steep slope from that bank, where there had once been a jetty.
> Everything now appeared pitiful and miniature in comparison with that grandiose world which had remained in my memory.]

Having witnessed Zoshchenko's childhood holidays through his eyes, and thus also possessing a bank of memories located in this situation, the reader shares the narrator's experience of juxtaposing present and past images.

This 'Proustian' perspective in chapters three to five reinforces the reader's and narrator's consciousness of ephemeralness. However, it is to be recalled that fragmented form has the dichotomous potential to impart a sense of transformation and liberation as well as entrapment in senseless sequences. The fact that the fragmented structure and its cross-references create new wholes from temporally remote instants encourages us to explore whether there is also an element of aesthetical transcendence that 'negates' the passage of time by spatializing it. Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* provides the obvious example of a novel that simultaneously portrays the ravages of time and constructs a 'spatial' perspective that is beyond and superior to it. Zoshchenko's work of course differs from Proust's in scale, in its division of recollections into separate fragments, and in the expressed intentions for writing. However, the basis is very similar: in response to a spiritual need, the writer-narrator non-chronologically re-experiences and artistically replicates a large expanse of his life.[69]

Proust's aspiration to 'to secure, to isolate, to immobilize – for a moment as brief as a flash of lightning – <...> a fragment of time in the pure state,' experienced 'at the present moment and at the same time in the context of a distant moment' chimes with the effect of Zoshchenko's 'fragments of existence withdrawn from time', even though the latter attributes no mystical or absolute meaning to them.[70] Within

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[68] Ibid., p. 181.
[69] In the course of this research, it has not been possible to establish whether Zoshchenko read *A la recherche du temps perdu*. To avert futile searches in the future, it can be reported that Proust is absent from the part of his personal library belonging to the archives of the Muzei Zoshchenko in St Petersburg.
[70] Marcel Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*, 3 vols., trans. by S. Moncrieff et al. (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), III, 905, 904, 908.

the non-linear fabric of spatial form, individual moments of time are dislocated and therefore static. Consequently, greater significance or at least emotional weight is thrown onto the moment. This is particularly true of Zoshchenko's miniatures, due to the potential of each one to be the key to his search, and thus also to the selection of vivid and existentially troubling memories. His fragments can therefore be considered in the context of the modernist investment of meaning in the instant – we recall Lawrence's 'quick moment of time'. Indeed, the recollecting narrator's commentary ascribes to these memories a value distinct from their practical function: 'И увидел, что они меня волнуют больше, чем даже желание найти причину моих несчастий.' [And I saw that they move me even more than my desire to find the cause of my miseries.][71]

May associates Zoshchenko's fragments with Horst Ruthrof's notion that the structure of the modern short story is often built around a 'boundary situation'.[72] Borrowing the concept from Karl Jaspers, Ruthrof defines a boundary situation as a sudden manifestation of 'grief, pain, loss, guilt, disappointment, betrayal, disillusionment, or, above all, [a] confrontation with death, in which man feels called upon to come to grips with himself and to make fundamental decisions concerning the meaning of his existence not normally made under the conditions of daily routine'.[73] Every one of the circumstances Ruthrof enumerates receives considerable attention in Zoshchenko's harrowing sequence of fragments, and a boundary situation forms the focal point of a considerable proportion of his texts.

By nature of their concision and fragmentary organization, Zoshchenko's texts are severely bracketed depictions of experience. Therefore, his existential confrontations are particularly distilled in comparison, for example, to Proust's revelations and most of Ruthrof's examples, such as Tolstoi's 'Smert' Ivana Ilicha' ['The Death of Ivan Ilich'] and several of Joyce's *Dubliners* stories. Precisely due to this comparative deficit of narrative context, any epiphanic quality in the *Before Sunrise* fragments cannot consist in a plot-based shift from unconsciousness to

[71] Zoshchenko, *Pered voskhodom solntsa*, p. 50. The phrase is repeated p. 118.
[72] May, pp. 116-17.
[73] Horst Ruthrof, *The Reader's Construction of Narrative* (London: Routledge, 1981), p. 103.

insight. As has already been pointed out, the various 'confrontations' within that relived period are not life- or plot-changing.[74]

With no signalled revelation on the part of the experiencing narrator, the meaningful confrontation is not so much between that younger, sick Zoshchenko and tragic realities of existence, as one between the re-experiencing narrator of 1926 / 1943 (along with the reader) and the young man in those boundary situations. This statement can be justified by examining the perspectival implications of fragmentary form.

Zoshchenko's frozen, dislocated moments possess a 'snapshot' quality with the 'motionlessness of memories', to borrow Gaston Bachelard's phrase.[75] This fragmentary stasis accentuates the temporal distance of contemplation and therefore also the narrator's awareness of life's evanescence. Susan Sontag describes the 'elegiac art' of photography as follows: 'To take a photograph is to participate in another person's (or thing's) mortality, vulnerability, mutability. Precisely by slicing out this moment and freezing it, all photographs testify to time's relentless melt.'[76] This could equally be applied to Zoshchenko's vignettes, to which he himself refers as 'моментальные фотографии' [momentary photographs].[77] Their very form implies that any heightened consciousness of existential truths resides in the re-experiencing act.

This is increasingly apparent the further back we travel in the narrator's years toward unconsciousness. The short text 'Ptitsa v rukakh' ['Bird in Hands'] is bare to the point of meaninglessness in reference to the familiar world:

> Один человек закрылся черным платком. Другой человек держит птицу в руках. Птица большая. Я стою и смотрю на нее.
> Человек поднимает птицу. Зачем? Чтобы она улетела? Она не может улететь. Она неживая. Она на палке.

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[74] Compare, for example, with the 'moral of the tale' endings of the autobiographical *Lelia and Min'ka* stories, whose narratives overlap with *Before Sunrise*: 'И я, лежа в своей постели, услышав эти слова, горько заплакал. И дал себе слово говорить всегда правду. И я действительно, дети, так и делаю.' [And, lying in my bed, having heard these words, I started crying bitterly. And I promised myself always to tell the truth. And, children, I indeed do so.] Mikhail Zoshchenko, 'Lelia i Min'ka: tsikl rasskazov' in his *Apollon i Tamara: Izbrannoe* (St Petersburg: Limbus, 1999), pp. 275-308 (p. 290).
[75] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, trans. by M. Jolas (Boston, MA: Beacon, 1994), p. 9.
[76] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Penguin, 1982), p. 15.
[77] Zoshchenko, *Pered voskhodom solntsa*, p. 50.

Кто-то говорит: готово.[78]
[One person covers himself with a black cloth. Another person holds a bird in his hands. The bird is big. I look at it.
The person raises the bird. Why? So it can fly away? It cannot fly away. It is not alive. It's on a stick.
Someone says, 'Ready.']

Only the intercession of the adult voice confirms the context, at the same time underlining the narrator's and reader's retrospective viewpoint:

Эта фотография мальчонки с вытаращенными от удивления глазами сохранилась у меня. Мне два года и три месяца.
[I still have this photograph of a little boy with eyes wide from surprise. I am two years and three months old.]

The reader is left to process the complex of the dynamic narrative and the 'dead' photographic artefact into which it was unexpectedly transformed. The photograph, very much as Sontag writes, emphasizes through its permanence the mutability of its moment.[79] Although such cases of direct juxtaposition of the experiencing and recollecting voices are rare among the fragments, this dynamic pervades them all. The conjunction of reviving lost time (with its implication of discovering something essential to the self) with an awareness of its absolute inaccessibility gives rise to an epiphanic tension.

The retrospectiveness of the revelatory impact is also suggested by the impassive, descriptive stance of the narrator. In a manner that recalls Babel''s dislocations of register and content, Zoshchenko distracts attention from narrative and inner experience by recording a wide range of peripheral images. The fragment 'Pytka' ['Torture'] exemplifies this:

Впереди огромное окно. За окном яркое синее небо.
Я проглотил кристалл сулемы. Этот кристалл у меня был для фотографии. Сейчас мне будет делать промывание желудка.
Врач в белом халате неподвижно стоит у стола. <...>
Ну что они меня будут мучить. Пусть бы я так умер. <...>
Вода льется в меня. Я задыхаюсь. Извиваюсь в руках врача. Со стоном машу рукой, умоляя прекратить пытку.
– Спокойней, спокойней, молодой человек, – говорит врач. – Ну как вам не совестно... Такое малодушие... по пустякам.
Вода выливается из меня, как из фонтана.[80]
[In front of me is a huge window. Beyond the window, a bright, blue sky.
I have swallowed a crystal of mercuric chloride. I had the crystal for photography. Now they're going to pump my stomach.

[78] Ibid., p. 162.
[79] The described photograph of the decimated family in Babel''s 'The Letter' functions similarly.
[80] Ibid., p. 57.

The doctor is standing motionlessly in a white gown by the table. <...>
Why do they have to torture me. Should have let me die. <...>
Water streams into me. I'm suffocating. I writhe in the doctor's arms. With a groan I wave my arm, begging them to stop this torture.
'Quiet now, young man,' says the doctor. 'You should be ashamed of yourself... Such faint-heartedness... all for a trifle.'
Water is pouring out of me, as from a fountain.]

Zoshchenko's curt sentences, although in their lucidity far removed from the radical modernism of Remizov and Belyi, form a subtly spatial pattern. We remain close to realism in the sense that conveyed details are selected from a matrix of phenomena congruent with the situation. However, adjacent sentences often do not relate to one another or have any bearing on the horrific action narrated. Moreover, the consistently flat tone and the lack of transitional markers between sentences suppress the reader's ability to construct hierarchies between images. Thus surface details (the opening images of the window and bright, blue sky), the central narrative information, the background fact that the crystal was used for photography, and the inner cry of agony are all presented as if they were of equal import. The result is a total picture of the moment, surely more disinterested and aesthetically contemplative than the narrator could have been at the time of experience. The closing simile of himself as a fountain strengthens this impression.

This combination of laconicism and aesthetic receptiveness to the heterogeneity of a scene is most acutely perceptible in the depictions of emotional crisis, where the attitude most starkly contrasts with the content.[81] However, the characteristic is also discernible in the broader body of the fragments. Descriptive background material and narrative occurrences are chopped into short units that are equal in brevity and – partly as a consequence – alike in their austere factualness. Indeed, pictorial surface images often precede crucial facts that convey their significance, as a result of which they initially appear incidental:

Холодно. Идет пар изо рта.
Обломки моего письменного стола лежат у печки. Но комната нагревается с трудом.
На постели лежит моя мать. Она в бреду. Доктор сказал, что у нее испанка <...>[82]
[It is cold. Steam comes out of one's mouth.
Bits of my writing desk lie in the stove. But the room struggles to warm up.

[81] The laconicism and 'aesthetic' detachment in Zoshchenko's horrific First World War vignettes once again bring to mind Babel''s *Red Cavalry*.
[82] Zoshchenko, *Pered voskhodom solntsa*, p. 93.

On the bed lies my mother. She is delirious. The doctor said she has the Spanish flu <...>]

Деревянные сани на деревянных полозьях. На санях стоит некрашеный гроб.[83]
[A wooden sledge on wooden runners. On the sledge stands an undecorated coffin.]

На тележке мальенкий письменный стол, два кресла, ковер и этажерка.
Я везу эти вещи на новую квартиру.[84]
[On a cart are a little writing desk, two chairs, a rug and a bookcase.
I am taking these things to a new flat.]

In each of these instances (the openings of consecutive texts) the picture is broken down into fragments. Contrary to the impression given by the concision of individual sentences, this results in the deceleration of time. In the first example the first four sentences are detailed variations on the same theme, and the same can be said of the following three. In the second example the disconnection of the two images leads to the repetition of 'sledge'. Thus both by recording a scene in apparently minute detail and by presenting those details as single units Zoshchenko prolongs the instant. In 'suspending' time and casting his gaze over the surrounding scene as well as its centre, he again regards the moment with a detached, aesthetic attitude.

The artist's distance is particularly palpable in the fragments depicting his infancy, where penetrating an unfamiliar existence facilitates artistic defamiliarization. The juxtaposed units in 'Umiraet diadia Sasha' ['Uncle Sasha is Dying'] seem all the more fragmentary because they represent an actual inability to differentiate the insignificant from the tragic:

Я сижу на высоком стуле. Пью молоко.
Попалась пенка. Плюю. Реву. Размазываю пенку по столу.
За дверью кто-то кричит страшным голосом.
Приходит мама. Она плачет. Целуя меня, она говорит:
– Умирает дядя Саша.
Размазав пенку по столу, я снова пью молоко.
И снова за дверью ужасный крик.[85]
[I'm sitting on a tall chair. Drinking milk.
Some foam gets in my mouth. I spit it out. I howl. I smear it over the table.
Behind the door some screams in a terrible voice.
Mama comes in. She is crying. Kissing me, she says:
'Uncle Sasha is dying.'
Having smeared the foam over the table, I again drink milk.
And again there are terrible screams behind the door.]

[83] Ibid., p. 94.
[84] Ibid., p. 95.
[85] Ibid., p. 164.

Here the text's repetitiveness (which we have already seen in the fragment in which the narrator and cat look at each other) further accentuates the scene's non-linear 'timelessness', both as a memory and as a lyrical, rather than dramatic, literary act.

The aesthetic detachment implied by the fragments' unobtrusive spatialism gives us the impression that from the temporal distance of recollection Zoshchenko in a sense transcends those memories. Both the large-scale spatialism – the distillation of memory into significant moments, presented non-consequentially – and this contemplative stasis within fragments point to a capacity to re-experience life aesthetically. Whereas perception in the midst of experience was ruled by instinct (and the flow of time determined its structure), the presented text evinces a mind released from natural determinism. The narrator's tripartite distribution, across original experience and the two recollective points of 1926 and 1943 (a perspectival equivalent of spatial form), further contributes to the impression that the authorial mind is free and outside time.

Zoshchenko's spatial form therefore appears to respond to the spiritual needs of an existence alienated from time and nature. In this respect, chapters three to five can be related to Frank's theory, and also to a pre-Revolutionary aspiration to transform existence and bring about spiritual renewal by means of a fresh poetic vision. The text's overall architecture and the composition of its individual fragments construct a 'timelessness' that defies its themes of transience and animal instinct. However, like Platonov and, indeed, in accord with prevailing ideology, Zoshchenko rejects the religio-mythical solutions to which previous modernists, despite their ambivalence, were indebted. While we can trace his aesthetic back to roots in works such as Belyi's symphonies, there is no indication that anything fundamental survives of the mysticism which prompted its development. On the contrary, the revelatory moments are existentialist confrontations with 'conditions of reality unprotected by myth'. Zoshchenko's artistic processing of existential nightmares resolves nothing philosophically; rather, his epiphany consists in the cathartic action (at once Aristotelian and Freudian) of facing the darkness.

Remaining Chapters: Path to Resolution

Following the scenes from the blighted first thirty years of Zoshchenko's life in chapters three to five, the focus of *Before Sunrise* moves to 1926 and his autotherapy. The remaining chapters narrate the analysis and overcoming of his former existence, before expanding the scope to draw wider lessons from the process undergone. The generic shift from portrayal to explanation and the perspectival transition from a bleak world into a happy one fundamentally changes the nature of the book. It also proposes a quite different interpretation of the preceding material than the hitherto impressions described above. Most importantly, the fragments' sense of irresolution and stasis is succeeded by a dynamic of transformation.

If the autobiographical moments represent the author's hell, then his *Purgatorio* is the painful path (from the second half of chapter five up to and including chapter eight) that conveys him from the 'depths' of dim, pre-conscious memories and the climactic confrontation with mortality on the shore of the Neva toward the brink of understanding and redemption. This section of the work challenges our initial response to the fragments. Yet its path towards resolution navigates through a plurality of contexts, resulting in a degree of ambiguity.

The second half of chapter five continues the narration of troubling memories and dreams associated with life's first perceptions, interspersing this with an account of Zoshchenko's encounters with the theories of Freud and Pavlov.[86] The narrator accepts Pavlov's 'scientifically proven' rules governing reflexes, and rather unconvincingly rejects Freud.[87] In chapter six he deconstructs his dreams involving water. He discovers that it is a stimulus of fear. Yet he also associates it with literary symbols of water invoking existential horror. It is here that Zoshchenko quotes Blok's 'Old, old dream' and, noting its similarity to his own, remarks, 'Я бежал от черной воды, от «забвенья навсегда»' [I was fleeing from black water,

[86] Zoshchenko, *Pered voskhodom solntsa*, pp. 166-80.

[87] As Hodge, p. 13, writes, Zoshchenko 'ascribes a disregard of reason to Freudian theory which it does not possess, and proceeds to use that fallacious supposition to connect it to fascism.' The political expediency of this is self-evident: at the time of writing Freud was proscribed and the nation was at war with Hitler's Fascism. What is more, Masing-Delic, 'Pavlovian', demonstrates that the self-diagnosis owes much more to Freudian analysis than the narrator admits.

from 'eternal oblivion']; this realization follows the above-quoted confrontation with mortality at the dacha-resort by the river.

The seventh chapter turns to another image haunting his subconscious: the destitute. Exploring the genesis of this symbol leads to the memory of his family's poverty after the death of his father, which in turn reminds him of the unfairness of the world into which he was born:

> Нет сомнения, это был несчастный мир. Он нес с собой болезни не менее опасные, чем те, о которых я пишу в этой книге. Он мог вселить тревогу, беспокойство, страх. <...> Мир богатых и бедных. <...> Мир, который меня устрашил.[88]
> [There is no doubt that it was an unhappy world. It carried diseases no less dangerous than those I write of in this book. It was capable of inspiring anxiety, agitation and fear. <...> A world of rich and poor. <...> A world that frightened me.]

This possibility that the author's malaise is rooted in his world's sickness marks the reintroduction of the important context of social transformation and of the notion that Zoshchenko's personal feelings needed to catch up with a changed world. He wonders why he should regret the passing of time: 'Что оставил я в том прошлом мире?' [What had I left behind in that old world?][89] This thought is followed by four anecdotes supposedly illustrating the evils of that epoch, depicting its prudishness, hypocrisy, callous treatment of the poor and, in the fragment entitled '"Dukh vyshe, molodoi chelovek"' ['"The spirit is higher, young man"'], its sickly spiritualism:

> Мадам Н.Н. кокетничает со мной. Однако разговор не клеится. Рядом муж. Это пресно.
> – Серж, – говорит она супругу, – ты бы, право, пошел к воде, не нужно купаться, но один раз окунуться – это следует, мой друг. Это полезно для твоего здоровья.
> <...> Раздевается.
> Я вижу чахлое его тело. Впалую чахоточную грудь. И жалкие руки, лишенные мускулов.
> Увидя на себе мой зор, судебный работник бормочет:
> – Дух выше, молодой человек. Дух, а не тело – вот в чем наша забота, наша красота.
> Осторожно ступая на песок, Серж, как по гвоздям, идет к воде.[90]
> [Madam N.N. flirts with me. But the conversation does not gather momentum. Her husband is next to her. It's dismal.
> 'Serge,' she says to her spouse, 'you really ought to go to the water. You needn't bathe, but you ought to have one dip, my friend. It's good for your health.'

[88] Zoshchenko, *Pered voskhodom solntsa*, p. 198.
[89] Ibid., p. 199.
[90] Ibid., p. 201.

<...> He undresses.
I see his sickly body. His sunken, consumptive breast. And pathetic arms, devoid of muscles.
Noticing my gaze upon him, the legal worker murmurs:
'The spirit is higher, young man. The spirit, not the body – that is our concern and our beauty.'
Carefully treading on the sand, Serge, as if over nails, walks towards the water.]

The narrator then turns to pre-Revolutionary culture, taking decadent Silver Age verse as his major reference point.[91] This literature is portrayed as one of artificiality, morbidity and excessive melancholy, valuing (like the consumptive lawyer) an imaginary transcendental realm above immanent reality. Zoshchenko recalls a poetry replete with fairies and 'нездешние цветы' [otherworldly flowers].[92] Once again he touches on Blok, whose genius absolves him of blame for the pain and sadness resounding in his verse: he 'соединил в себе все чувства своего времени' [united in himself all the feelings of his time].[93] In denouncing Blok's world and connecting it with his sick self (we recall the reaction of seeing his own fate in Blok's shocking face and the resemblance of his disturbing dreams to *Terrible World*), Zoshchenko attacks the justification of its and his psychological-existential crisis. Furthermore, he distances himself from the aspiration to use art as a vehicle to a higher realm. Therefore, in addition to the explicit denunciation of the life described in his fragments, there is a tension between the position of chapter seven and the 'aesthetic transcendence' detected in the fragments.

Before Sunrise then returns to the detective-work of identifying and explaining unconscious reflexes. In chapter eight Zoshchenko focuses on the development of an infant neurosis. Excavating his early history, he traces a series of incidents which fostered irrational fear-reflexes to water, outstretched arms and roaring noises. This process culminates in the recovery of two crucial traumas: the horror of surgery without anaesthetic, and an incident in which a fierce thunderclap caused his breastfeeding mother to faint and drop him, hurting his arm.[94] These traumatic events thus emerge as the direct causes of Zoshchenko's neurosis: he now knows why he is wretched.

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[91] Ibid., pp. 207-09.
[92] Ibid., p. 209.
[93] Ibid., p. 208.
[94] Ibid., pp. 218-19, 220-21.

However, the process of making conscious these associations has revealed three distinct contexts – existential fears and social influences, as well as psychological phenomena – which cannot be integrated with ease. The journey of understanding therefore lacks clear linearity. Nevertheless, it leads to a revelatory destination. Becoming fully conscious brings about Zoshchenko's cure, and this process is relayed with strikingly religious symbolism – echoing the imagery which permeated the depiction of his unhealed state.

The climactic tussle between his old and new selves is described in a vocabulary of revelation and conversion. (Indeed, Hanson deems *Before Sunrise* a secular conversion narrative, with similarities to Augustine's *Confessions*.)[95] The rising sun of Reason does battle with the quasi-demonic forces that have beset the narrator:

> Свет моего разума осветил ужасные трущобы, где таились страхи. <...> Когда солнце осветило место моего поединка, я увидел жалкую и варварскую морду моего врага.[96]
> [The light of my reason illuminated the terrible dens where my fears lurked. <...> When the sun illuminated the site of my duel, I saw my enemy's pitiful and barbarian face.]

Armed with reason, he casts off this anthropomorphized foe, and it finally flees. His resulting transformation borrows the imagery of resurrection and rebirth (as before, but now in unambiguous terms). Zoshchenko states:

> Я был убит, растерзан, искромсан, с тем чтоб снова возникнуть из праха. <...> Я поднялся с постели уже не тем, кем был.[97]
> [I was slain, torn apart, cut to pieces, in order that I might rise again from the dust. <...> I rose from my bed a new man.]

The prologue has already, similarly, affirmed that 'речь будет итти о моих молодых годах. Это все равно, что говорить об умершем.' [I shall be speaking of my youth. This is the same as speaking of one deceased.][98]

From this point in chapter nine up to the end the narrator, whose voice was previously projected onto both pasts and present, can be identified with the reborn, happy Zoshchenko alone. In other words, the remainder of *Before Sunrise* is written from a perspective of resolution. These last five chapters are devoted to drawing

[95] Hanson, 'Autobiography', pp. 142-43.
[96] Zoshchenko, *Pered voskhodom solntsa*, pp. 236-37.
[97] Ibid., p. 237.
[98] Ibid., p. 39.

conclusions from the author's experiment, further theorizing about his own experience, before speculatively discussing other cases of neurosis (from personal acquaintances to Poe and Gogol') and suggesting how reason can ameliorate life by overcoming suffering and fear. The last three chapters are exclamatorily entitled 'Razum pobezhdaet smert'' ['Reason Conquers Death'], 'Razum pobezhdaet stradaniia' ['Reason Conquers Sufferings'], and 'Razum pobezhdaet starost'' ['Reason Conquers Old Age'].

Zoshchenko's celebratory attitude to both his individual new life and the new Russia reenergizes the paradigm of social determinism. The reader detects more strongly a parallelism, and even a relationship, between his personal transformation and the Russian utopian leap. The setting for Zoshchenko's happy ending is a *Paradiso Sovietico*. Indeed, since the Reason lauded in the final third of the work is very much identified with 'our' general progress (in contrast, for example, with the Freudian and National Socialist West), the apparently disparate influences upon his former plight all prove to be neutralized by a common force. In history, Reason vanquishes the social causes of unhappiness, and its current, military engagement with the barbarian forces of unconsciousness is painted in terms evocative of a decisive, apocalyptic battle (references to the victor's horse, darkened world, and millennium usher Symbolist imagery into a tentative marriage with Soviet Reason):

> Мир померкнет на тысячу лет, если этот ефрейтор на сером коне победителя въедет на весенние поля, столь еще мало вспаханные сохой науки.[99]
> [The world will fall into a thousand years' darkness if this lance-corporal on the grey horse of the victor rides onto the spring fields, still so little cultivated by the plough of science.]

In addition, that which reshaped society can change the individual. It is the application of Reason – in the form of the empirical discoveries of a great (and pro-Revolutionary) scientist – that corrects Zoshchenko's irrational reflexes. Most significantly, the victory of Reason also annuls the existential anxieties that were nurtured by morbid spirituality. In essence, Zoshchenko seems to have made an impressive metamorphosis from the imprisoned individual of the fragments into a New Soviet Man.

[99] Ibid., p. 254.

Given that Reason provides the key to happiness and the imagery of rebirth, *Before Sunrise* can be considered a belated contribution to the god-building mission that addressed the existential problems lingering in the materialist age following the displacement of Christianity. As Hanson has put it, Zoshchenko converts to Reason in place of God.[100] The work therefore presents the progress of a 'religious' journey from a chaotic hell into paradise, which not only transcends but reinterprets the world of the fragments.

It was argued above that the lyrical, spatial qualities of chapters three to five indicate the command of a distanced, and thus transcending consciousness. The subsequent course of the supernarrative seems to complement this impression, presenting the rebirth of the author in full control of his psyche. That artistic mastery over his material – his life – chimes with the opportunity that emerges:

> отдать свои новые силы искусству – тому, чем я раньше был занят по необходимости, не умея в полной мере реализовать своих чувств иначе как на бумаге.
> Но теперь мой разум был свободен.[101]
> [to devote my new powers to art – to that which I used to practise out of necessity, being incapable of fully realizing my feelings other than on paper.
> But my reason was now free.]

Perhaps Zoshchenko's cure did release him as an artist to write lyrically, as, according to Slonimskii, he had desired. However, there are fundamental tensions between the artistic worldview of the lyrical fragments and the rational one that unfolds in the last chapters. The aesthetic vision in chapters three to five enables the author to contemplate his biological existence 'from outside', thereby rising above his fears, without disavowing them. With its overtones of the aesthetically-mediated transcendence of an earlier tradition, this contrasts with the position taken up in chapter eleven, 'Reason Conquers Death'. 'Привычка думать о смерти, как о чем-то обычном, естественном, уничтожает страх.' [The habit of thinking about death as something normal and natural destroys fear.] People who have succeeded in doing so:

> умирали, как должен умирать человек, – без растерянности, без паники, с деловым спокойствием. <...> в их жизни отсутствовал основной противник – животный, не всегда осознанный страх.[102]

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[100] Hanson, 'Autobiography', p. 143.
[101] Zoshchenko, *Pered voskhodom solntsa*, p. 238.
[102] Ibid., p. 287.

> [died as a man ought to die – without dismay, without panic, but with a business-like calm. <...> in their lives the main opponent – animalistic, not always conscious fear – was absent.]

Zoshchenko thus claims that the fear of mortality (reduced to something animalistic) can be eliminated by recognizing its naturalness, and seems to advocate a complete acceptance of nature by an intellect in mastery of emotion. The writer's dictatorship of Reason, compelling passive acquiescence to the laws of nature, draws him into alliance with a state ideology that deems existential angst irrational and unnatural. This grants little leeway for an emotional or imaginative account of existence, let alone the sort of artistic, 'existentialist' confrontation with reality we have detected in the fragmented chapters. Indeed, as we have seen, that section of the work proved so unacceptable to the regime that the contextualizing second half was barred from publication.

Consequently, although Zoshchenko depicts his youth retrospectively, the narratorial point of view outside that 'hell' cannot be equated with the 'paradise' he subsequently constructs. Instead, we should read the two in opposition: a transformative art that looks back to pre-Revolutionary culture against a positivism representative of the Stalinist present. The messianic imagery running through *Before Sunrise* is apt to both, due to the adaptability of the paradigm to changing circumstances. The references to messianic suffering and resurrection apply equally to the Christ-like artist and the ideological penitent. The passage describing Zoshchenko's annihilation and rise from the dust could be read at face value or in the context of the Symbolist conception of the Poet, inspired by Pushkin's 'Prorok' ['The Prophet']. Similarly, the central metaphor of the revelatory sunrise has a wealth of apocalyptic associations: it is the dawn of utopia, lit by Reason, and the beacon of suffering prophets, Christ and Pushkin.

Dialogism

Reading the parts of *Before Sunrise* in light of one another, we perceive its polyphony. As we know, the work's primary voices belong to the narrator at different junctures of his life, and its basic dialogue is between the depiction of his sick self and the commentary by his cured self. The interpretive part of the book – at once an exercise in psychoanalysis and literary exegesis – constructs a thorough

interpretation of his sickness. The various aspects of the diagnosis turn out to have been latent in the stories: 'Теперь в [этих рассказах] можно увидеть почти все. В них можно увидеть четыре условных раздражателя' [Now in these stories almost everything can be seen. The four conditioned reflexes can be seen in them].[103]

However, from the multiplicity of contexts arising within and around the fragments he selects some as significant while neglecting others. The fragments depict several instances in which the narrator suffers from a lack of parental affection or the instability of their marriage, yet this context does not arise in the subsequent interpretation. Furthermore, as we have seen, the major context of anxiety about biological existence, though not ignored, is reduced to the technical problem of how to suppress 'animalistic fear'. In other words, although every motif of Zoshchenko's analysis prove to have been represented in the fragments, his analysis does not seem to adequately reflect our own complex sensation of reading them. The reader has already shared Zoshchenko's fraught experiences and understood them in an ethical or existential framework. For example, the narrator's emotional response to the weight of memory associated with the site of his childhood holidays is entirely comprehensible in itself. The later implication that a reflex to water (given the proximity of the Neva) is significant thus appears superfluous. If the presence of water does affect the reader, it is through its cultural connotations as a psychological Styx and as Blok's symbol (inserted by Zoshchenko) of death and oblivion. That is, water reinforces the existential context more than the psychoanalytical one. Similarly, the horror felt at the bombs of the First World War is self-sufficiently clear without our needing to relate this response to the author's conditioned reflex to thunder.

By rejecting certain ideas, Zoshchenko inevitably gives them a voice and enters into conversation with them. Thus a number of 'wrong' voices resound in *Before Sunrise* and feed the potential for ambiguity. Silver Age culture is salient in the text thanks to quotations (from Blok, Briusov and others) suggesting its mood of *Weltschmerzen* and desire to escape this life to an aesthetical-spiritual realm. In addition to the titles of chapters four and six alluding to Blok, that of chapter three,

[103] Zoshchenko, *Pered voskhodom solntsa*, p. 229.

'Opavshie list'ia' ['Fallen Leaves'], is borrowed from Rozanov's 1912 work, which, like Zoshchenko's chapter, is a fragmented exploration of the modern existential predicament, conveyed through the author's personal experiences.[104] Politically unacceptable voices are sometimes misrepresented, but sometimes so obviously caricatured (for instance, the anecdotes from which '"The spirit is higher, young man"' is taken) that the reader is not particularly convinced by authorial objections. Thus the polyphony of the text admits apocalyptic-religious modernism as well as official utopianism, anachronistic melancholy as well as happiness, the proscribed Freud in addition to Pavlov, and the opinions of individuals who struggled to sing along with the Revolutionary odes. In the context of Stalin's terror, there is audaciousness in confessing the acquaintance (even in disagreement) with a 'lonely woman' capable of saying:

> Новый мир – это грубый, мужицкий мир. В нем нет той декоративности, к какой мы привыкли. Нет той красивости, какая радует наш взор, слух, воображение.[105]
> [The new world is a coarse and boorish world. It doesn't have that decorativeness to which we were accustomed. It doesn't have that beauty which pleases our sight, hearing and imagination.]

Since the plethora of contextual frames, quotations, anecdotes and reported dialogues undermines the authority of the supernarrative, the burden of persuading by rigorous, consequential argument is increased. Yet, as seen above, Zoshchenko uses religious rhetoric to euphorically depict the powers of rationality and science. The obvious tension in treating Reason as an article of faith erodes the illusion of linearity in the overarching plot of darkness to light. The steps of the journey to health are accompanied by motifs of certainty, such as 'несомненно' [undoubtedly] and 'нет сомнения' [no doubt] – expressions of faith, rather than empirical reasoning.[106] The narrator's frequent wrong-turns teach us to mistrust his prior confidence. As early as the commentaries that frame chapters three to five, the seeds of suspicion towards his certainty are sown. Having arbitrarily decided that nothing significant could have occurred before the age of sixteen, he realizes:

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[104] V.V. Rozanov, *Opavshie list'ia* (St Petersburg, 1913-15).
[105] Zoshchenko, *Pered voskhodom solntsa*, p. 199. In this respect Marietta Chudakova's view of the partial publication of *Before Sunrise* as an attempted 'thaw' can be endorsed. M.O. Chudakova, ''Sredinnoe pole' russkoi prozy', in *Vtoraia proza 20-kh - 30-kh godov XX veka*, ed. by W. Westeijn et al. (Trent: Dipartimento di Filologoche e Storiche, 1995), pp. 113-22 (p. 117).
[106] See, for example, Zoshchenko, *Pered voskhodom solntsa*, p. 187.

> В самом деле! Почему я отбросил детские годы? <...>
> С какого возраста мне начать? Комично начать с года. <...> И даже в четыре. <...> Я должен начать с пяти лет, – подумал я.[107]
> [Indeed! Why did I discard the years of childhood? <...>
> From what age should I start? It would be comical to begin at one. <...> Or even at four. <...> I must start at the age of five, I thought.]

This re-positioning is repeated almost verbatim at the end of the next selection of fragments: 'В самом деле, почему же я отбросил младенческие годы?' [Indeed, why did I discard my infant years?][108] Thus the overarching dialectic proceeds by means of contradicting often overstated or simplistic propositions. Chapter nine, for instance begins:

> Значит, это был сексуальный психоневроз?
> Нет, это не был сексуальный психоневроз[109]
> [So it was a sexual neurosis?
> No, it was not a sexual neurosis]

Even the moment of cure at the axis of the plot fails to give the impression of an organic development. As suggested by the conversion and resurrection imagery, it appears to us as a *deus ex machina*. Intellectually, even if we were satisfied that the illness has been explicated, the explanation of Zoshchenko's recovery lacks the thoroughness required to convince: 'В этом и заключилось излечение. Отсутствие логики лечилось логикой' [The cure consisted in this. The absence of logic was cured with logic].[110] Moreover, this moment is dramatically anticlimactic, exclamatory but not intimate as in the fragments, and inserted between two extended theoretical passages.[111]

The supernarrative of the author's cure that re-imposes itself after the fragments thus cannot be regarded as a gradual development of understanding. That plot rests on a mysterious leap, redolent of the eschatological one from old to new Russia.

While the *heteroglossia* and flawed linearity of *Before Sunrise* undermine the argument leading to an unequivocally positive ending, our mediation of the two halves is influenced even more strongly by the contrasting psychological effects of the different narrative registers in this '*Allkunstwerk*'. It is important to examine the

[107] Ibid., pp. 117, 119.
[108] Ibid., p. 159.
[109] Ibid., p. 230.
[110] Ibid., p. 239.
[111] Only the fifth of chapter nine's ten subsections focuses on the narrator's personal experience of 'rebirth'. Ibid., pp. 236-39.

total, kaleidoscopic effect of this plurality of voices because the differing registers attached to the respective narrative zones impart unequal emotional weighting.

The fragments belong to a consistent voice that we can term 'artistic' because, as seen above, it engages with the aesthetic surface of the material. It mainly consists of brief, present-tense sentences. The other parts of *Before Sunrise* are to a greater extent concerned with presenting a factual account of a semi-scientific experiment and an exposition of its conclusions. Stylistically, therefore, they eschew the literariness of the fragments and assume a non-poetic, non-fictional register. Although the literary and extra-literary sections interlock (for example, chapters three to five are framed by commentaries relating to the experiment), we can identify a gradual shift from 'artwork' to 'essay'. From the second half of chapter five to the end of chapter eight (our 'purgatory') theoretical writing – discussing Freud and Pavlov – is interspersed with a terse narrative style, similar to the fragments, relating psychologically intense experiences such as dreams and the epiphany by the Neva. Beyond the point of 'conversion' the artistic voice withdraws further still. After the resolution of the central problem *Before Sunrise* appears to become (contrary to Zoshchenko's above-quoted declaration) more a 'treatise' than a 'literary work'.

The shift from narrative to theoretical discourse naturally affects our reading experience:

> Даже если допустить, что этот конфликт высшего [мозга] с низшим является причиной нервных страданий, то эта причина не всеобъемлющая, это лишь частичная причина, далеко не главная и не основная.
> Этот конфликт высшего с низшим мог (допустим) привести к некоторым сексуальным психоневрозам. И если б наука увидела в этом конфликте, в этой борьбе, единственную причину – она не пошла бы дальше раскрытия сексуальных торможений.[112]
> [Even if it is assumed that this conflict between the higher and lower brains is the cause of nervous conditions, then this cause is not all-embracing, it is only a partial cause, by no means the main or fundamental one.
> This conflict between the upper and lower could (let us assume) have led to certain sexual neuroses. And if science were to see this conflict, this struggle, as the only cause, it would go no further than the discovery of sexual inhibition.]

In amateur-scientific passages such as the above the author simply presents an argument, with 'German syntax' (as Scatton notes) and clear connections between

[112] Ibid., p. 177.

thoughts.[113] The contrast with the fragments, with their short syntax concatenating images that are not necessarily directly connected, is obvious. Here the clarity of the idea has precedence over stylistic effect. For instance, the repetitions of 'conflict' and 'cause' assist the reader in navigating complex sentences, and the tautological juxtapositions of 'main / fundamental' and 'conflict / struggle' serve to underline a key idea. Thus both the content and the delivery involve the reader more intellectually than emotionally.

After the resolution Zoshchenko adopts an informal, conversational style for the non-scientific extrapolations from his experience. This voice assumes a light and even slightly playful tone. For instance, in chapter ten the narrator pretends to lose his place:

> Итак, на чем мы остановились? Не на словах ли Байрона:
> [So, where did we stop? Was it with Byron's words:]

Having quoted four lines of Byron, he continues:

> Нет, мы остановились не на этих печальных словах. Мы остановились на черном списке замечательных и прославленных людей.[114]
> [No, we did not stop with Byron's sad words. We stopped with the blacklist of remarkable and celebrated people.]

The levity of this non sequitur is reinforced by the triteness of 'remarkable and celebrated'. There are many examples of such familiar-style verbal profligacy in the latter stages of *Before Sunrise*, for instance, 'счастливые и радостные слова' [happy and joyful words].[115] Such prose demonstrates Zoshchenko's accomplishment as an observer and imitator of popular discourse. While fluent, it is unremarkable. As with the scientific register, its psychological impact is negligible in comparison with the fragments, and its studied banality serves to deflate the serious tone they had set.

The mixture of genres and corresponding styles thus inevitably imparts the strongest weighting to the fragments, and these leave the deepest imprint on the reader. The force of the artistic prose dealing with sickness exposes by contrast the psychological shallowness of the parts of the book dealing with the cure and the consequent apotheosis of Reason. To similar ends, the immediacy of the fragments'

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[113] Scatton, p. 212.
[114] Zoshchenko, *Pered voskhodom solntsa*, pp. 255-56.
[115] Ibid., p. 312.

present tense contrasts with the predominant past tense of the supernarrative, despite the fact that its standpoint resides in the present and a comparatively recent past. Along with the flaws in the way that the argument is set out, this stylistic inequality places the unresolved and fragmented portrait of the artist as a young man, rather than the narrative of his recovery, at the centre of *Before Sunrise*.

After Resolution

The unsatisfactory impression of the second half of the book is compounded by the fact that the *anagnorisis* and consequent *peripeteia* occur far from the end. The resolution of the central problem (which was anticlimactic in itself) is followed by some seventy-five pages divested of narrative purpose. The matrix of personal happiness and socio-ideological transformation places the narrator in a situation analogous to the post-apocalyptic one we have seen in *Chevengur*, and presents the same challenge of thinking and writing beyond an end-point.

After the resolution Zoshchenko abandons his personal narrative and discusses the various benedictions of the life led according to Reason. Just as Platonov depicts the Chevengurians, who have putatively attained their utopia, in a state of uneventfulness, so the final three chapters of *Before Sunrise* lack both action and direction. While their titles, panegyrizing all-conquering Reason, remind us of the hymns and odes to which, according to Zamiatin, paradisiacal writing is limited, the chapters' static end-feeling derives principally from their banal discursiveness.[116] The narrator strings together disparate anecdotes supposedly illustrative of the power of Reason against suffering, ageing and the fear of mortality. This includes speculation and gossip about Gogol''s horror before death, the effects of cosmic rays, and the secrets behind the youthfulness of certain old men (one recommends a diet of tomatoes, cranberries and carrots, others – the inspiration of work).[117] Both the irrelevance of these to the recently central narrative and their inefficacy in supporting the present theme impart an almost Chevengurian air of absurdity, particularly in relation to the high seriousness of the earlier fragments. The content of chapters eleven to thirteen thus bathetically deflates the titles.

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[116] Evgenii Zamiatin, 'Rai', in his *Ia boius': Literaturnaia kritika, publitsistika, vospominaniia* (Moscow: Nasledie, 1999), pp. 53-59 (especially p. 54).
[117] Zoshchenko, *Pered voskhodom solntsa*, pp. 281-2, 300-1, 305-6.

Furthermore, the specific claims made within those chapters are more modest than their strident titles. Conquering death turns out to be about overcoming the fear of death, and conquering old age is really about postponing it. We know that his sprightly old men will have to sicken and die in the end, despite their love of labour and vegetables. Zoshchenko poorly disguises the tension in a dogma that both claims that Reason has directed history to a transcendental end, and accepts the material basis of existence. To adapt Thomas Seifrid's idea with which the Platonov chapter closed, Reason is held to be superior to our animalistic instincts, yet subordinate to matter. The world in *Before Sunrise* has been perfected and in this Soviet Eden we must nevertheless die. Whereas Platonov exposes the hopes of the Chevengurians, his reader detects the tragedy of their frustration; the great difference is that Zoshchenko, having in the fragments and chapter six painted a compelling picture of horror at material existence, links personal and national resolution to the renunciation of this horror.

The impressions left by the last three chapters are cemented by the afterword. For a moment the lyrical voice of the fragments appears as Zoshchenko, having completed his manuscript, gazes down on Moscow from his tenth-floor hotel room:

> Холодное октябрьское утро. Тишина. Москва еще спит. Улицы пустынны и безлюдны.
> Но вот где-то на востоке розовеет небо. Наступает утро. Лязгая железом, проходит первый трамвай. Улица заполняется народом.
> Холодно.[118]
> [A cold October morning. Quiet. Moscow is still sleeping.
> But somewhere in the east the sky is blushing. Morning is beginning. Clanging with iron, the first tram passes. The street fills with people.
> It is cold.]

Here the syntactic and observational simplicity of chapters three to five is unexpectedly wedded to the optimism of the second half of the work. The healthy narrator's transcendent distance now places him spatially *before* a sunrise. Yet he breaks this nascent synthesis by slipping back to his conversational voice. He chooses to end his book with a valedictory verse by Praxilla, and states he will perhaps utter it again when he bids farewell to life, not just this book:

> Вот что прекрасней всего из того, что я в мире оставил:
> Первое – солнечный свет, второе – спокойные звезды
> С месяцем, третье – яблоки, спелые дыни и груши...

[118] Ibid., p. 312.

Впрочем, к звездам и к месяцу я совершенно равнодушен. Звезды и месяц я заменю чем-нибудь иным, более для меня привлекательным. Эти стихи я произнесу так:
Вот что прекрасней всего из того, что я в мире оставил:
Первое – солнечный свет, второе – искусство и разум...
А уж на третьем месте можно будет перечислить что-нибудь из фруктов – спелые груши, арбузы и дыни...[119]
[These are the most beautiful things I have left behind in the world:
First – the light of the sun; second – peaceful stars and the moon;
Third – apples, ripe melons and pears.
Actually, I'm completely indifferent to the stars and the moon. I'll replace the stars and the moon with something else, something more attractive to me. This is how I will say the verse:
These are the most beautiful things I have left behind in the world:
First – the light of the sun; second – art and reason...
And then in third place why not list some fruits: ripe pears, watermelons and cantaloupes...]

Thus ends *Before Sunrise*, the descent to a prosaic tone followed by the butchering of classical verse and an absurd digression about fruits. The final ellipsis accentuates the sheer failure of the afterword, and second half of the book in general, to supplement narrative resolution with a dramatic or emotional sense of closure. Meanwhile, the ripe pears and melons simultaneously leave us with a still life image of transient, sensual pleasures, something in the context of a valedictory poem we are entitled to take as a *memento mori*. Zoshchenko thus not only attaches an unresolved cadence to his story of transformation, but at this open ending once again introduces the theme of mortality. If the last image represents the ephemeralness of life, then art and reason (the other two 'most beautiful things' he leaves behind) by now appear very different approaches to that problem – distinct refractions of the idealized light of the sun.

Overview

Before Sunrise bifurcates 'End-feeling'. It reflects two, in many ways incompatible, conceptions that were prevalent during different periods of Zoshchenko's life. On one hand, Zoshchenko the artist reflects a modern sensibility toward time; on the other (speaking as a healed and reformed autobiographer) he presents an ideologically conformist view of utopian resolution. In one persona he comes to terms with his world through aesthetic vision; in the other he transforms it through the scrutiny of cold Reason.

[119] Ibid., p. 313.

The narrative fragments in chapters three to five display facets of both Frank's and Kermode's theories of modernist timelessness. As we have seen, both their inner construction and collective pattern are 'spatial', which creates a 'transcending' distance and thus gives the restoration of lost instants a revelatory impact. If this betrays the influence of a Symbolist aesthetics that saw art as a route to religious experience beyond time, the relationship is qualified by Zoshchenko's absolute lack of mysticism. While reducing life's and history's arches to non-tangential moments, these short texts are endowed with the immanent, non-transcendent 'sense of ending' about which Kermode writes. They present an existence self-consciously defined by its temporariness and sceptically distanced from grander narratives spanning overhead. This aspect underlines Zoshchenko's distance from the pre-Revolutionary roots of Russian modernism and severely qualifies the implications of the aesthetic and psychological transformation.

This fragmented text is enwrapped in a larger one, and thereby incorporated into a linear plot which resolves its static crisis. Embracing the Stalinist myth of perfected history, the supernarrative is equally defined by its sense of end. This second type of end-condition is also reflected in the structure of *Before Sunrise*. A supposedly linear supernarrative leads up to a point of transformation, followed by the resolved stasis of the final stage, consisting of a meandering assortment of thoughts.

As argued above, the overarching story of the cure and particularly the banality into which it implodes compare unfavourably with the fragments, and therefore its didactic attempt to co-opt them is unsuccessful. As a result, that unresolved image of a life recollected and represented, rather than his successful experiment with Reason, becomes Zoshchenko's significant act. His artistic 'resurrection' of the past better justifies the rhetoric of rebirth than his unconvincing rehabilitation. As Masing-Delic writes, 'it could be claimed that irrational art, rather than sober reason, becomes the narrator's true ally in his struggles with phobias and fears. <...> They make life meaningful in spite of the inevitable end in the "abyss", which even reason cannot make less inevitable.'[120]

Given the miraculous instantaneousness of the cure and formlessness of *Before Sunrise* after the resolution, its principal (perhaps only) linear progression is the loss

[120] Masing-Delic, 'Biology', p. 94.

of its literary voice as the narrator aligns himself with the perfect society. The 'timelessness' of both Zoshchenko's *Inferno* and *Paradiso* supports Brodsky's claim that, structurally at least, hell and paradise have a lot in common.[121] Yet (as for Dante) hell proves to be a more fertile environment for the imagination. Contrary to this reader's impression, Zoshchenko, who emphasizes his identity as a writer in all sections of the book, insists that his new state has improved him as an artist. In the epilogue, for instance, he makes the following, rather suspiciously defensive, statement:

> Но разве от этих битв не пострадало мое ремесло художника? Разве победивший разум не изгнал вместе с врагами то, что мне было дорого, – искусство?
> Нет. Напротив. Моя рука стала тверже. И голос звонче. И песни веселей. Я не потерял мое искусство. <...> [Моя книга] написана во многих жанрах. И жанр художника здесь, смею надеяться, не самый слабый.[122]
> [But perhaps my craft as an artist suffered from these battles? Perhaps victorious reason banished not only my enemies, but also that which was dear to me – art?
> No. On the contrary. My hand has become firmer. And my voice more sonorous. And my songs merrier. I didn't lose my art. <...> My book is written in many genres. And the artist's genre, I dare to hope, is not the weakest.]

The assertion that the artistic genre of the work is not the weakest is an understated truth. Yet the previous claim that his art has gained strength is questionable in the context of the development of his career, as well as of his book. *Before Sunrise* certainly becomes superficially 'merrier', but only as the 'artistic genre' disappears. Zoshchenko's writing from the late 1920s does perhaps become more 'sonorous' in the sense that clarity supersedes mischievous irony, but whether this constitutes an advance as an artist (or an increase in merriment) is highly debatable.

In another ambiguous statement, our author speculates that the artist's professional attachment to fantasy makes him prone to the irrational associations that can cause mental illness. On the other hand, absolute health is the ideal for art. Yet, he continues, the completely healthy person might prefer real life to fruitless fantasies, and to leave the imagining to others. Thus, he concludes, art and illness remain in dangerous proximity.[123] This argument, consistent with the overall line of the book, embraces with one arm Chernyshevskii's association of health with rational consciousness, whereas fantasy is the product of an impoverished reality. Yet

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[121] Joseph Brodsky, 'Catastrophes in the Air', in his *Less Than One: Selected Essays* (London: Penguin, 1987), pp. 268-303 (p. 286).
[122] Zoshchenko, *Pered voskhodom solntsa*, p. 309.
[123] Ibid., pp. 275-76.

Zoshchenko's optimistic outlook on reality is rendered somewhat at odds with his 'Underground Man' willingness to ally himself with imagination at the possible price of his health.[124]

The disjunction of healthy Reason and complex Art and the tension between what is authoritatively stated and the impressions made bring us back to the question of reliability. If Zoshchenko is totally sincere, then *Before Sunrise* is an incoherent piece. However, when it is considered in the context of the writer's established reputation for exploiting the possibilities of 'bad writing', deluded narrators and bathos, one suspects that it is too perfectly flawed for the subversion of the salvation story to be wholly unconscious. It is difficult to read *Before Sunrise* without being reminded of the era in which it was written. May points out the that the narrator's rebirth as a happy man in 1926 coincides with the beginning of Stalin's consolidation of power, and of a trend of intolerance toward discordant sounds in the rejoicing choir.[125] The same context arises with Kern's observation that the last words of the epilogue, 'должен побеждать разум' [Reason must conquer] closely echo the final words of Zamiatin's *We* ['разум должен победить'].[126] Zamiatin's irony (whereby the forces of reason 'must be' victorious due to unreasonable state coercion) could easily transfer to Zoshchenko's situation.

The author's exact stance cannot be confidently pinned down. Stalinist terror was a potent force in the 1930s, but so were ideals of utopian transcendence, and Marietta Chudakova's excellent monograph rather plausibly reads the emergence of Zoshchenko's non-literary voice as a response to a new epoch in which miracles can be achieved in real life.[127] However, May is correct in stating that 'when we read *Before Sunrise* as both manifestation and veiled discussion of the effects of

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[124] T.R.N. Edwards, *Three Russian Writers of the Irrational: Zamyatin, Pil'nyak, Bulgakov* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 17-18, notes that Dostoevskii's rejection of Chernyshevskii's rationalism was a significant context for twentieth-century writers. Zoshchenko in fact paraphrases the Underground Man's statement (though, in polemical mode, he attributes it to Dostoevskii himself) that 'не только очень много сознания, но даже и всякое сознание болезнь' [not only too much consciousness, but even any consciousness at all, is a disease]. Zoshchenko, *Pered voskhodom solntsa*, p. 277; Fedor Dostoevskii, 'Zapiski iz podpol'ia', in his *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, ed. by V.G. Bazanov, 30 vols (Leningrad: Nauka, 1972-90), V (1973), 99-179 (p. 102).
[125] May, p. 119.
[126] Zoshchenko, *Pered voskhodom solntsa*, p. 311; Evgenii Zamiatin, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia*, ed. by E.B. Skorospelovaia (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1990), p. 154.
[127] Chudakova, *Poetika*, especially pp. 164-87.

censorship, it comes to seem more unified than any "straight" reading reveals it to be.'[128]

Given this sense that the work reads as though it *ought* to be ironic, part of our response does not dependent on whether we believe that the author is 'with us'. Regardless of whether the happy ending is a 'regression' of the truth-fearing narrator or a sly, Kermodian subversion of paradigm and dogma, Zoshchenko's combination of great and mediocre writing (a contrast almost as dramatically effective as the fragments in themselves) illustrates how far things have shifted since the times when poetry was seen as a potential basis for individual and social eschatological transformation. The new Russia had ever less interest in this function of art, both because it saw itself as an already transformed and perfected society and due to its conviction that matter is absolute and not to be transcended. In accordance with this, the aesthetic in *Before Sunrise* is gradually divested of its role in transcendence, and its literary sections are fettered to a banished and diseased Silver Age. Deliberately or otherwise, Zoshchenko thereby exposes the dead-end of the imagination into which Russian End-thought had strayed.

[128] May, p. 123.

Chapter Six – Conclusion

The first chapter of this thesis introduced two theories which propose contrasting interpretations of modernist prose fragmentation as a response to time. Joseph Frank's 'Spatial Form in Modern Literature' stresses the suppression of the temporal aspect of a text, as a result of which it can be apprehended instantaneously as a whole, in a manner more commonly associated with the visual arts. Drawing upon Worringer's psychological understanding of abstraction, Frank regards this 'timelessness' as an aesthetic escape from modern temporal anxieties and alienation from nature. On the other hand, Frank Kermode's *The Sense of an Ending* explores how a sceptical attitude toward absolute origins and ends might influence narrative forms. His theory thus to a greater extent accentuates the propensity for modernist fragmentation to realistically depict a complex, contingent present that is severed from past and future. These established models therefore suggested two responses to the crisis of time of the modern age. The first sets out how modernist prose could aesthetically 'transcend' time. The second presents the possibility of modernist prose reflecting and participating in the disassembly of deterministic myths of time.

It was suggested that these accounts could correspond with contrasting reactions to the image of Revolutionary Russia, defined by its apocalyptic discourse. The fragmented form of Russian modernists might represent existence after 1917 as a spiritually satisfying timelessness, or else reflect a new 'middle-perspective' mistrustful of the very idea of an End.

Theories Applied to Case Studies

The case-study chapters three to five have brought to light varying correlations with the two theories. Of the three texts, *Red Cavalry* emerges as the one which best supports the spatial theory. The fragmentary surface of Babel''s stories is unified by the narrator's all-embracing stance, based on the distance of aesthetic contemplation. This simultaneous survey of disparate elements represents the best hope of salvaging any kind of integrated meaning from the tensions in stories that are not resolved narratologically. The revelatory impact often experienced by Babel''s readers derives from the instantaneous perception of contrasting elements, and intensifies in direct proportion to their incongruity or incompatibility. One is

also encouraged to perceive this perspective as revelatory by the narrator's own emotional transformations during moments of 'spatial vision' and by the sublime backdrop of apocalyptic imagery, which additionally provides a possible interpretive context for the weakened sense of time.

On the other hand, as was demonstrated in the chapter on *Red Cavalry*, this sense of revelation amid the messianic feelings, chaos and transformation attached to the Revolutionary experience is tempered by a proclivity to subvert myths of transcendence and resolution. Those same binary oppositions that make the spatial, total experience of Babel''s stories so viscerally piquant also serve to undermine the potential for intellectual synthesis. His present is informed by a plurality of messianic visions of historical resolution and deliverance, which exist both in clashing views of the current crisis and in analogies with the past. In this respect, Babel''s treatment of the apocalyptic myth of the Revolution parallels Kermode's association of fragmentation with a distrust of absolutes. He interacts with a mass of religious and existential aspirations invested in this putative moment of dénouement, while retaining an ironic sense of the subjectivity of his epiphanies and others' expectations.

The first case study thus confirmed the supposition made in the introductory chapter that, despite Kermode's objections to the idea of spatial form (which, as we saw, constituted an exaggeration of Frank's stance), aspects of the two theories may coexist. Frank examines pre-eminently the psychological impact of fragmentation, while Kermode is more sensitive to its philosophical and ideological implications. Applying both theories to *Red Cavalry* reveals a dualistic treatment of the national Apocalypse: richly exploiting the dynamics of religious myth and revelation, while gnawing at its basis.

Platonov's *Chevengur* turned out to have greater affinities with Kermode's approach to modernism than with Frank's. Like *Red Cavalry*, the novel explores conceptions of the Revolution as a transcendental end-point. As with Babel''s account of the Civil War, we observe an interference with the reader's sense of temporality, and this can be associated with Platonov's manifestly more explicit treatment of the theme of striving toward the End. The basic point of the spatial theory, that linear time can be nullified by fragmentation of conventional narrative

sequence, thus proves pertinent to *Chevengur*. However, we once again find that the perspective of the narrator plays an important role in determining the reception of form, and Platonov's disembodied narratorial voice contrasts fundamentally with Babel''s artist-narrator Liutov. As a consequence, Platonov eschews Babel''s transcending perspective that can salvage an aesthetic whole from the dislocated parts. *Chevengur* is therefore not 'spatial' in Frank's more precise sense of eliminating linear time in order to represent a spiritually consoling Ideal world.

Instead, the interaction of form and narrative events gradually reveals an actuality far removed from the utopian aspirations of the Chevengurians. This subversive exposure of millenarian myth to a cyclical and perhaps irreparably meaningless reality chimes with Kermode's account of the modern novel dismantling grand narratives of time and history, and locating the human condition in a present which is less and less defined by expectation of future closure. On the other hand, as we saw, the critique of myths about progress towards perfect worlds that Kermode reads into modernism is foreign to Platonov, who at another level remains deeply attached to the desire for social and existential transformation.

The final case study identified two distinct aesthetic and philosophical positions, distributed by Zoshchenko's *mise en abyme* device into separate sections of *Before Sunrise*. The fragmentary, framed narrative of the author's past responds, rather like *Red Cavalry*, to both Kermode's and Frank's theories. On one hand, it depicts an existence assaulted by the determinism of biological impulses and natural cycles. The anti-linearity of the structure of this section emphasizes the dearth of fundamental development over the period depicted, particularly as chronologically separate instants present recurrent circumstances and unchanging reactions. Therefore, Zoshchenko undermines structurally (as well as thematically) the possibility of resolution through spiritual transfiguration, an idea introduced by references to the messianic culture of that lost youth. On the other hand, the narrator, as an artist, demonstrates the capacity to stand back from his material – himself – and, rather similarly to Liutov, to overcome his clearly portrayed limitations and to make some sense of the senseless by forging that material into an atemporal, aesthetic form. While this is far removed from the type of transcendence envisaged by the Symbolist generation, and even from Babel''s secularized

religiosity, Zoshchenko's method hints at the banished tradition of aesthetic-spiritual transformation against which he polemicizes.

The framing supernarrative of Zoshchenko's auto-therapy and rebirth introduces a new phenomenon to this study: an instance of plot resolution. After the fragments the work leaps into a new world in which existential problems are now apparently transcended in a linear manner – in sequential 'life' rather than as spatial art. This would appear to lessen the applicability of *Before Sunrise* as a whole to either of our main theoretical contexts. However, as the previous chapter pointed out, the later development of the work is undermined by its ambiguous polyphony, and particularly because it suffers from the contrast with the brilliant fragments. The multiple anticlimax of the ending, incongruent with the author's resounding declarations of resolution, further weakens the credibility of the narrative as a journey from darkness into light. Consequently, *Before Sunrise* proves after all to (deliberately or unintentionally) involve a Kermodian exposure of the linear form of mythical narratives to the openness and complexity of reality.

Broader Conclusions

The three texts examined in depth therefore exhibit a degree of responsiveness to both Frank's and Kermode's claims. The propensity for fragmentation to create a liberating sensation of removal from time is demonstrated in *Red Cavalry* and the fragments from *Before Sunrise*. Its converse potential to depict an experience of time lacking the secure anchor of an end-destination is also evident in all three works, but particularly *Chevengur* and *Before Sunrise*.

However, when we assess the works in relation to the concrete values that Frank and Kermode associate with their theories, we become aware of the limits of such parallels. Consequently, the 'interesting redefinitions of the theoretical propositions' envisaged in the first chapter do indeed come into fruition. This project has frequently encountered specifically Russian circumstances that distance our material from the Western works at the basis of Frank's and Kermode's

suppositions. Formal fragmentation within the respective cultures correspondingly resonates in distinct contexts.[1]

The uniqueness of the Russian situation can be observed both in its inherited characteristics at the beginning of the modernist period and, thereafter, in its unfolding historical experience. The first chapter introduced the notion that modernism appeared in a Russia that, as Chaadaev had put it, stood 'outside time'. The country's 'backwardness' led it to experience modernity's transitions, which occurred more gradually in the West, in a more intense and accelerated way. Therefore, momentous philosophical, technological and experiential shifts shared a cultural space with pre-modern, religious paradigms. Moreover, of course, Russia's awareness of its isolation from the Western historical path toward secularism nourished a national messianic idea. Its reception of the cataclysmic dislocations of time around the turn of the century was thus informed by existing eschatological sensibilities.

The relative importance of the national question to the Russian modernist imagination is reflected in the fact that the fragmented aesthetic is not as reliant as it is in the West on the theme of the city and its emphasis upon a technological, urban modernity. Russia itself presented a chaotic and polarized image – at once European and Scythian, bound to stagnant Rus' and a radiant future – that expressed the epochal significance of the present. While Russian modernism did produce polyphonic cityscapes, such as Belyi's *Petersburg* and numerous texts and canvases of the avant-garde, there are also many instances of fragmentary treatments of Russia as a whole or of its provincial elements. From our case-study texts, *Red Cavalry* and *Chevengur* provide such examples, to which we can add Belyi's *Serebrianyi golub'* [*The Silver Dove*] (1909), Remizov's *Whirlwind Russia* and Pil'niak's *The Naked Year*.

[1] If it were our aim to make fundamental comparisons between Russian and Western culture it would be necessary in the following section to deal with the enormous diversity of the latter during this period. In addition to works from the secular High Modernist canon, there are 'straight' treatments of apocalyptic themes, such as Stanley Spencer's *The Resurrection* (1924-26), set in Cookham churchyard, and Olivier Messiaen's *Quatuor pour la fin du temps* of 1940. We would also have to take into account the intellectual appeal of Marxism and interest in technological utopias in the West, besides its growing scepticism toward the idea of progress. However, since our intention is primarily to examine the applicability of Frank's and Kermode's theories, it is sufficient to focus on texts that exemplify the tendencies they describe.

Parallels between Russian texts and Western-based paradigms are further qualified by the fact that modernist fragmentation in Russia was pioneered by Symbolist writers who were inspired by Solov'ev's mission to enact apocalyptic transformation. As we saw in chapter two, the perception of immanent and imminent revelation and the transcendental aspirations of those 'theurgic artists' (and of later, superficially less mystical modernists) correspond with the stylistic and structural properties of their texts. In this respect, the technical discoveries made by Frank's spatial theory transfer effectively to the Russian context. As was observed in the introductory chapter, the 'transcendent, timelessness' effect Frank associates with textual fragmentation obviously lends itself to Russia's preoccupation with its place at the end of time and the Symbolists' interest in the relationship between aesthetic and religious experience. Consequently, the spatial visions of Russian modernist narrators – such as those of the *Second Symphony*, *The Twelve* and *Red Cavalry*, or Maiakovskii as Christ – resound more literally with the criteria of timelessness and transcendence than do the cultural and historical totalities constructed by Pound, Apollinaire and Joyce. However, this in itself represents a profound contextual difference, which distinguishes the respective connotative possibilities of equivalent formal properties. In a broadly entrenched apocalyptic tradition that wielded serious ambitions to transform reality, the element of aesthetic transformation in spatial texts has implications beyond the psychological escapism Frank sees in Western literature and Worringer in abstract art.

None of Frank's examples makes absolute religious claims. The quasi-mystical idea underpinning *A la recherche du temps perdu* does not, beyond the individual perspective, relate to any broader mythical context. Another novel we might term 'spatial' is Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* (1925). J. Hillis Miller has revealed that its structure revolves around the central idea of an All Souls Day, but here too the return of the dead pertains only to memory.[2] Nor does *Ulysses* make grand claims for its achievement of unifying mythical time with everyday minutiae.[3]

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[2] J. Hillis Miller, *Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982), pp. 176-202.

[3] Indeed, Joyce earns Kermode's approval for balancing mythical form against the formlessness of reality – or 'uniting the irreducible *chronos* of Dublin with the irreducible *kairoi* of Homer'. Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 58.

Western visions of returning to a pagan, aesthetic engagement with immanent (cyclical) reality, such as Lawrence's *Apocalypse*, tend to consist in an acceptance of unalterable existential conditions and thus a renunciation of the Judeo-Christian thirst for permanent resolution. As Paul de Man comments, Nietzsche's well-known refrain in *Die Geburt der Tragödie* [*The Birth of Tragedy*], 'nur als ästhetisches Phänomen ist das Dasein und die Welt ewig gerechtfertigt' [only as an aesthetic phenomenon are existence and the world forever justified] is 'more an indictment of existence than a panegyric of art.'[4] By contrast, the image of transfiguration breaking out from aesthetic experience into life is the subtext to much Russian art, from the Symbolist cult of *zhiznetvorchestvo* to Stalin's definition of the writer as an 'engineer of the soul'. As Irene Masing-Delic's book *Abolishing Death* reveals, Fedorovian dreams of achieving immortality endured throughout the Silver Age and deep into the Soviet epoch.[5]

In *Chevengur* and the supernarrative of *Before Sunrise* such a context of real hope for the transformation of life is quite explicit. Marietta Chudakova's observation that there was a surprising 'уверенность в короткости пути от «новой жизни» до «нового здоровья»' [confidence in the shortness of the road from the 'new life' to a 'new health'], occurring in her chapter on *Before Sunrise*, could equally pertain to the Chevengurians' expectation of a mastery over nature in their utopia.[6] In fact, her comment arises in relation to Babel''s expressed hope, after the untimely death of Bagritskii, that experimental medicine would prevent repetitions of that great loss. As has been discussed, Babel', the most influenced by Western literature of our three writers, displays an element of 'pagan aestheticism'. Yet this exists alongside a range of transformative views of time: apocalyptic (Russian, Catholic and Hassidic), utopian, and artistic. The spatialism of *Red Cavalry* is thus not wholly confined to the vacuum of the imagination. In chapter four it was found that Platonov's use of the spatial device to produce a timeless effect is aimed at exploring the idea of real-life transcendence of time, rather than enacting it in art for the reader's psychological relief. Zoshchenko's fragments do appear to give meaning to existence 'only as an aesthetic phenomenon', although their spatial

[4] Paul De Man, *Allegories of Reading* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 93.
[5] Irene Masing-Delic, *Abolishing Death: A Salvation Myth of Russian Twentieth-Century Literature* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992).
[6] Marietta Chudakova, *Poetika Mikhaila Zoshchenko* (Moscow: Nauka, 1978), p. 164.

structure, like that of *Red Cavalry*, afford glimpses of a messianic discourse. However, his book proceeds to place itself in the camp of real life and to renounce the value of art in itself. Whether or not we accept this stance as sincere, it underlines the fact that art as a means to an end can easily be discarded if more effectual instruments are discovered.

The distance we sense from *l'art pour l'art* in each of the three case-study texts can also be perceived in the persistence of an ethical consciousness amid modernist form. Babel''s aesthetic epiphanies were found to have a humanist basis of sympathy and tolerance. Similarly, if there is any authorial presence in Platonov's novel, whose narrator is principally an extension of the protagonists' minds, then it resides in the compassion we are compelled to feel towards those doomed, blind dreamers. The ethic of brotherly love offers the most elevated and complete perspective upon the work, rather similarly to the way in which it enables Liutov, in revelatory mode, to integrate opposites into a unified whole. Before generalizing about an inherent ethical basis in Russian modernism, one should recall that the Symbolists and particularly the avant-garde (for example, *Victory Over the Sun*, 'The Intelligentsia and the Revolution', Maiakovskii's more bombastic poetry, and countless canvases representing faceless, geometric humans as units of the mass) were sometimes culpable of favouring the sublimity and formal perfection of myth over prosaic, real people and their needs. If Babel' and Platonov expose the dangers of an excessive devotion to paradigms, Zoshchenko's reformed voice risks endorsing a utopian ideal at odds with individuality and imagination. His supernarrative denies the existential crisis of materialism, and therefore also denies the need for the sort of existential sympathy characteristic of Platonov. Yet even here Zoshchenko repeatedly points out that his basic motivation is to further the humanist cause of happiness. In doing so, he reveals a commonality between the Symbolists' old, artistic recipe for transformation and the fiercely anti-modernist world he now inhabits. To this extent Zoshchenko and, to a greater one, Babel' and Platonov fare well in comparison to the anti-humanist excesses to which the demand for pure forms led figures such as Pound, Lewis and Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, and which lie at the core of Kermode's hostility to the spatial idea.

Therefore, while Frank's description of the mechanics of an atemporal and transcendental effect are clearly applicable to the Russian situation, our case studies reveal a very different relationship to timelessness and transformation from that at the basis of his theory. The same Russian-West European contrast proves meaningful when we examine converse, deconstructive tendencies within our writers in the context of Kermode's reading of modernism. A Western alienation from conventional understandings of time informs both theories: spatial form as the construction of alternatives in cyclical or mythic time and aesthetic timelessness, or non-sequentiality as reality's ironic resistance to rigid paradigms. If Frank and Kermode agree that the West was attempting to 'wake up from the nightmare of history', then contemporary Russia, placed by Chaadaev outside time, was not oppressed by a notion of being the product of centuries' linear growth. Where Russia detached itself from the past, it did so with an optimistic sense of mission.

As a result, the vulnerability of End-myths can appear a tragic frustration of transformation in Russia, rather (as is the case with many of the Western modernists Frank and Kermode discuss) than a liberation from an unsatisfactory existential order. The 'eschatological' character of Western modernism involved a momentous shift away from traditional paradigms; that of Russian modernism to a significant extent represented an intuited consummation of national myth. To Westerners as diverse as Apollinaire, Joyce and Musil, a non-transformable present possesses the potential for intellectual and poetic renovation. The same thought gives rise to horror among Russian writers. Blok and Belyi saw cyclical perpetuity as an existential prison from which to break out. From 1917 the transformative hypothesis is tried out on history, and Babel''s awareness of historical recurrences contributes to his anxieties about the Revolution. Platonov transmits still greater despair through the tragic confusion of protagonists who find themselves caught up in the wrong scheme of time. The world of Zoshchenko's fragments cries out for transcendence but is fettered to the cyclical shape of biological existence. Blok's poetry and his remarkable appearance supply him with images of both the yearned-for resolution and the dreaded oblivion, with greater emphasis on the latter.

It is perhaps among writers often associated with existentialism that we find closer analogies to the Kermodian extremities of our Russian case-study texts. Kafka's

cruel plot sequences could be compared with the Chevengurians' blind wandering toward disaster. However, a better case for comparison is Samuel Beckett, for apocalyptic themes and expectation of ends feature so prominently in his work. Many of his characters are defined by a need for the absolute meaning provided by a transcendental ending, but such resolution is hopelessly remote. Beckett travels a considerable distance along the myth-destroying path advocated by Kermode, who writes:

> He is the perverse theologian of a world which has suffered a Fall, experienced an Incarnation which changes all relations of past, present, and future, but which will not be redeemed. Time is an endless transition from one condition of misery to another, 'a passion without form or stations', to be ended by no *parousia*. It is a world crying out for forms and stations, and for apocalypse; all it gets is vain temporality, mad, multiform antithetical influx. <...> Order, the Christian paradigm, he suggests, is no longer usable except in irony.[7]

Beckett's hells and purgatories convey circumstances which condemn humans to remain as they are: searching and waiting in vain, lacking even self-insight (see for example the great play *En attendant Godot* [*Waiting for Godot*] (1953) and 'Comment c'est' ['How It Is'] (1961)). In his story 'La fin' ['The End'] (1945-46) a wretched, destitute man narrates the end of his life, though in his bewilderment he seems oblivious to his approaching mortality. He apathetically staggers through a senseless series of privations, humiliations and transitory glimmers of hope, and ultimately pre-empts his natural demise in what could be called a suicide, if his act were accompanied by any indication of conscious motivation. The final sentence grants the narrator an unexpected moment of lucidity: 'The memory came faint and cold of the story I might have told, a story in the likeness of my life, I mean without the courage to end or the strength to go on.'[8] Of course, his story *has* been told, and Beckett's poignant, self-conscious ending provides an opportunity to reflect on how the structure of this narrative mirrors life: without significant end, without significant form.

Red Cavalry also shows expectation outliving God, and *Before Sunrise*, if the reader chooses to read between the lines, can be taken as the depiction of a deluded belief in transcendence that is exposed by its lack of direction. However, of the three texts,

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[7] Kermode, p. 115.
[8] Samuel Beckett, *No's Knife: Collected Shorter Prose 1945-1966* (London: Calder and Boyars, 1967), p. 67.

Chevengur is best suited to comparison with Beckett. Platonov's figures invest faith in religious and, more often, utopian abstractions to fulfil their need for resolution and meaning, but the plot dashes their expectations and keeps them in their state of misery and perplexity. We can identify a strong parallel between Platonov's non-linear plot construction and Beckett's middle-perspective, both standing for a narrative that has lost sight of its end (and the two writers share other traits: the mixture of irony and despair, the eschatological intertexts, and the depiction of the physicality, and therefore the fragility, of existence and memory in *Chevengur* and *The End*).

Despite the similarities, the mark of a Russian culture with its religious-messianic past and Soviet present upon all three writers distinguishes them from Beckett, and Western existentialism in general. It is arguably more than a semantic distinction that where Beckett places his characters in the eternal hopelessness of hell and purgatory, the disillusionment of Babel', Platonov and (perhaps unconsciously) Zoshchenko is imparted in the context of heaven. (Even if *The Foundation Pit* consists of an *Inferno* and a *Purgatorio*, its subtext is the *Paradiso* toward which society is striving.) Our three writers' protagonists are conscious of the need for transformation, even where they are unaware of the futility of their hope; by contrast, the desire for ends tends to be more latent in Beckett's characters (such as the narrator of *The End*). Moreover, the collective aspirations manifested in Liutov, the Chevengurians and the healthy Zoshchenko have the potential to inspire mutual consolation or at least common grief when they are denied. We may compare this with the more solipsistic damnation to which Western existentialist protagonists are condemned. Therefore, although the Kermodian analysis of non-linear form proves capable of revealing equivalent, ironizing tendencies in Russian texts, caution should be exercised in projecting the underpinning philosophical assumptions onto the Russian context.

Historical Influence: Chronological Trends

This final chapter has so far evaluated the findings from the three case studies in relation to Frank's and Kermode's theories. This has primarily involved comparing the three writers' senses of time with Western responses. It has enabled us to extrapolate some conclusions about the unique characteristics of Russian experience

in the modernist period: cultural conditions that shaped the understanding of general cataclysms in the context of messianic self-perceptions, rather than underlining the inadequacy of existing schemes of history and time. We have not yet directly addressed Babel''s, Platonov's and Zoshchenko's relationships to time in the context of the specific, unfolding circumstances of post-Revolutionary Russia. The Revolution is the other major factor that detaches our material from Western paradigms. Apart from that, being written after a cataclysmic event that was widely interpreted as an apocalyptic end-point also distinguishes the case-study texts from the fragmentary literature of the first generation of Russian modernism. This section will assess what has been discovered about the impact of the 'post-apocalyptic' perspective on *Red Cavalry*, *Chevengur* and *Before Sunrise*. This involves two particular factors: an (increasing) temporal distance from the point of resolution, and the influence of the (unfolding) social experiment.

We have found contrasting dynamics in the considered period, reflecting the mixture of ideas projected onto the Revolution. It is at once an apocalyptic and a utopian leap into the future, at once divine and atheistic. Bolshevism posits a Hegelian-Marxist scheme of historical progress, culminating in a perfected world. At the same time it insists on the material basis of reality, which is more consistent with a conception of undirected, perhaps cyclical, time. (These tensions reflect the flexibility of the Apocalypse and its utopian derivatives; simultaneously connected to a linear process and breaking out from it, the myth can assimilate historicism or mysticism, images of both order and chaos.) The distinctive ambivalence of the post-Revolutionary situation might thus feed into either the mythical aspect described by Frank or the deconstructive one associated with Kermode. The 'timelessness' of modernism after the point of historical climax could represent visions as diverse as a mystical End, a secular historical resolution, or an end of belief in linear development.

Social transformation, the well of idealism and momentousness of events serve to reinforce mythical interpretations of reality. Blok and other *skify* exemplify this response. However, the occurrence of the Revolution also facilitates new challenges to the eschatological model. The radiant future is no longer cocooned in hypothesis, but liable to be measured against reality. The Revolution additionally deflates the

'imminence' of Russia's crisis, which raises the problem of how to reinvest a deeply-rooted orientation toward the future – historically and existentially, and also narratologically.

Our writers probe the idea of resolution more conspicuously than those of the Symbolist generation prior to the Revolution. Babel''s parallel visions of the present conflict, the Napoleonic wars, and persistent ethnic struggles sow doubts about the finality of communist emancipation, particularly when repetitiveness is exhibited not only in history, but in the great cycle of birth and death. Subsequence to the End is a more obvious context in *Chevengur*, which even invents Pashintsev's sanctuary for the lost time of 1918 and 1919. Platonov's challenge to the model is double-pronged. First, he identifies the gap between aspiration and reality by conflating utopian and natural time. Secondly, he explores the permanent paradise condition, presciently described by Zamiatin. He brings into relief the predicament of how to preserve meaningful existence, imagination and thought, if the utopian ideal were attained and history and time stood still. If this emerges in the narrative of *Chevengur*, it is in its narration that *Before Sunrise* illustrates the problem. Zoshchenko, in his official voice, is the only one of the three writers to explicitly endorse the reality of a transformative resolution in the past. Yet, as chapter five demonstrated, the emotional intensity and artistic inventiveness evident in his narration of the fallen past implode when he comes to the task of writing about a redeemed present.

With the obvious qualification that each writer has his individual, to some degree unchanging, outlook, a chronological development can be tentatively identified here. Babel', writing about the Civil War as an almost contemporary event and still in the early stages of the new regime, is naturally less troubled by the 'subsequence problem' than Platonov, in the late twenties, and Zoshchenko, another ten to fifteen years later. Regardless of his intellectual misgivings, the end-situation does not suppress his artistic *joie de vivre* at all.

This touches upon another possible trend visible in the three texts: the attitude toward the aesthetic. The opening chapters proposed that Russian modernist form, developed by Symbolist writers under the influence of Solov'ev, implicitly expresses their apocalyptic aspirations. The juxtaposition of dissociated images is

conducive to the poet-prophet's ambition to effect a visionary rearrangement of reality. In the case of Belyi's *Second Symphony*, structure is tangibly connected to the author's meditations on time and eternity. Later, during the years of social turmoil, the fragmentary style lends itself aptly to the conflicting forces and dislocated experiences in reality, and links them all to an explanatory context. The combination in fragmentation of formlessness and a 'cubist' universality of perspective complements the broadly-held view of the Russian Apocalypse as a scarcely comprehensible, chaotic event, but part of a higher order. *The Twelve*, *Whirlwind Russia*, and *The Naked Year* are such evocations of the Revolutionary vortex. *Red Cavalry* can also be categorized among these 'mid-apocalyptic' pieces. Chapter three associated Babel''s clashing style with the cataclysmic world he describes. We found traces of the 'prophetic' perspective, mediating opposites, in his synthesizing epiphanies, along with thematic hints of a connection between art and religious experience (both in his revelations and in the merging of artworks and devotion). These attributes implied that Babel''s conception of the aesthetic is indebted to the Symbolist tradition, even if he substantially erodes its religious basis.

To the end of his life Babel' continues to place more value on aesthetic experience than the other two writers. However, *Red Cavalry*, with its riotous, lurid revelations and juxtapositions, clearly belongs to the ornamentalist explosion of the early 1920s as his later 'autobiographical' stories (which Patricia Carden regards as spatialism in the style of Turgenev!) do not.[9] As the post-apocalyptic period matures, the visceral Revolutionary text naturally becomes less pertinent as well as less original. Although *The Twelve*, *The Naked Year* and *Red Cavalry* contextualize *Chevengur* (also a polyphonic rendering of the Revolution), there is little sense in Platonov of aesthetic interaction with the sublimity of the crisis. Conversely, there is more urgency in the question of what might follow the moment of breakthrough. Even though Platonov borrows from the Symbolist tradition, as his *Proletkul't* roots and the specific parallels with Belyi's *Second Symphony* suggest, he eschews the 'prophetic perspective' that reveals Babel''s more direct inheritance from Symbolism and Futurism. If Babel' withdraws the religious constituent from the

[9] Patricia Carden, 'Ornamentalism and Modernism', in *Russian Modernism: Culture and the Avant-Garde, 1900 – 1930*, ed. by George Gibian and H.W. Tjalsma (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1976), pp. 49-64 (p. 63).

transformative aesthetic, then Platonov goes further by rejecting the aesthetic as a means of (or as an alternative to) transformation.

Once again we must take into account the fixed attributes of writers and the distinctions between them. Platonov was always more utopian than Babel'. On the other hand, his poetry of the early 1920s (as evident in the lines quoted at the beginning of chapter four) does indicate a much more unmediated relationship with the Symbolist idiom, as though ecstatically imagining cosmic transcendence were a step toward realizing it. It is a decade after the Revolution, above all in *Chevengur* and *The Foundation Pit*, that Platonov offers a devastating critique of the empty abstraction of linguistic paradises. Indeed, the drift away from utopian optimism continues in his later writing. After the fall of Chevengur and the emptiness of the foundation pit, Platonov's 'post-utopian' output of the late 1930s, as Hans Günter notes, comes to centre less on the great collective project and more on the individual and the 'small family' unit. This apparent distancing from the agenda of radical social transformation is accompanied by a shift from modernist language to classical simplicity.[10]

Before Sunrise is an effective finishing point to survey the shifts that have occurred since the Revolution because it juxtaposes voices of the Silver Age past and the Stalinist present. The fragmented section of the book contains remnants of the transcendent paradigm and revelatory structures – as in Babel', stripped of their original, divine foundations. The framing narrative makes a broader ideological attack on modernism's obsession with the spiritual and aesthetic. Indeed, the demise of the artistic voice invites the question of whether the aesthetic retains any value in the new world.

The reducing worth of aesthetic experience can be observed in correlation to the state's attitude. *Red Cavalry* appeared in relatively liberal conditions when modernists had their patrons among the Bolshevik hierarchy; *Chevengur* was written as hostility towards modernist aestheticism grew; by the time of *Before Sunrise*, Socialist Realism was the only acceptable form of literature. This need not

[10] Khans Giunter, 'Liubov' k dal'nemu i liubov' k blizhnemu: Postutopicheskie rasskazy A. Platonova vtoroi poloviny 1930-kh godov' in *'Strana filosofov' Andreia Platonova: Problemy tvorchestva*, vol. 4, ed. by N.V. Kornienko (Moscow: Imli Ran / Nasledie, 2000), pp. 304-12.

be regarded in terms of coercion, but conceivably as a common ideological trend among writers who broadly sided with the Revolution. Where the aesthetic is strongly linked to religious revelation, a historical victory over religion is likely to lead to a revaluation of aesthetics. This chapter has already remarked on the growing emphasis upon the human as an ontological basis. We have also mentioned the fact that after the Revolution, transformations are to be expected in the concrete arena of life, rather than in the subjunctive moods of prophetic art. Scholars have drawn attention to the transference of Russian modernist aspirations into Soviet rhetoric and practice. Boris Groys argues that Stalin, having crushed the avant-garde, realizes its basic precepts.[11] Irina Gutkin also points out continuities in transition from modernism to Socialist Realism.[12] This context is consistent with Platonov's (semi-ironic) attempts to realize metaphors and Zoshchenko's anti-aesthetic transformation. Indeed, Chudakova asserts that there are similarities between Platonov's and late-Zoshchenko's utilitarian attitudes to language and to the role of the artist.[13]

The passing of the mid-Revolutionary spatial text thus appears to involve a new desire to address the consequences of the breakthrough. This can be manifested in utopian projections of real-life transformation. Yet it can also engender a critical engagement with received paradigms, for reality can seem revelatory and stationary only for a limited duration of time. These two post-Revolutionary possibilities feed into the idealistic and subversive aspects we have seen in Platonov and Zoshchenko.

Another apparent development – again connected with our theme of the writers' need to fill the vacuum created by the collapse of religion – is an increased awareness of the philosophical ramifications of materialism. Without the correlative of mystical eternity that softened the impact of modern anxieties on the Symbolist generation, the issue of physical mortality looms more menacingly over these later writers. Babel', Platonov and Zoshchenko deal more squarely with the materiality of existence than their modernist predecessors (in this respect more closely

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[11] Boris Groys, *Gesamtkunstwerk Stalin: Die Gespaltene Kultur in der Sowjetunion* (Munich: Hanser, 1988).
[12] Irina Gutkin, 'The Legacy of the Symbolist Aesthetic Utopia: From Futurism to Socialist Realism', in *Creating Life: The Aesthetic Utopia of Russian Modernism*, ed. by Irina Paperno and Joan Delaney Grossman (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), pp. 167-96.
[13] Chudakova, *Poetika*, pp. 172, 197.

resembling such realist texts as 'The Death of Ivan Ilich' and Chekhov's 'Skuchnaia istoriia' ['A Boring Story']).

Red Cavalry is pregnant with emblems of the natural order. Death is often presented with horrific naturalism. Birth and fertility to some extent counterbalance death and violence, and suggest a sensuous world of 'pagan immanence', with concomitant ends and beginnings. However, the narrator's own aversion to killing highlights the inadequacy of this attitude as a substitute for the absolute promises of the religions. In *Chevengur* and *Before Sunrise*, nature's cycles and the raw fact of mortality are still more conspicuous. As we saw, for Platonov the vision of biological existence is profoundly tragic. His protagonists' endeavour to transcend physical existence is thwarted by their own fundamental materiality. Zoshchenko's fragments display a similar horror in the face of animalistic determinism and mortality. However, the supernarrative introduces a new attitude, which claims that knowledge of these facts need not prevent happiness. Zoshchenko argues that material existence and the absoluteness of death are natural, and that a healthy human being in mastery of Reason must accept what is natural. He has done so and is therefore no longer troubled by his future death. Of course, the important question is whether he has truly come to terms with his materiality, or is given no choice. Since the regime promotes itself as the transformer of life, it does not welcome the portrayal of mortality as a tension in the utopian scheme. Either way, Zoshchenko's utopian claims for the capacity of science to solve existential problems sustains our impression that his resolution settles up cheaply (delaying the ageing process and combating the physiological causes of suffering) in comparison with the 'religious' problems set out in the fragments.

In the context of our theoretical framework, there is a broad correlation between this involvement with materialism and a less absolute, less transcendent sense of End. This would suggest that our case-study texts are closer to Kermode's descriptive modernism than the Symbolist generation was, an aspect that becomes increasingly perceptible with chronological progression. The end-discourse now appears to be infused with a greater stress on individual mortality, which Kermode associates with more interaction with reality, and less with myth. However, the twenties and thirties are hardly a paragon of sobriety after the Silver Age's bout of mythical

thinking. Certain claims for the religious apocalypse are abandoned, and *Before Sunrise* in particular exemplifies the adjustments undertaken to update it as a utopian myth.

To take stock of impressions gained of the post-Revolutionary context, it is perhaps helpful to return to the context of Meyer Howard Abrams's *Natural Supernaturalism*, mentioned in the introductory chapter. In Russia is there a process analogous to the impact of the French Revolution, inspiring a social apocalypticism that would give way to the ambition of transforming the world by transforming vision? The evidence of this project would signify that the Bolshevik Revolution did alter Russia's approach to ideas of time and transformation. Moreover, it provoked the need for reassessment of the more mystical and literal apocalyptic claims, which any millennial group encounters when the predicted hour comes and reality inevitably falls short of prophecy. However, the particular circumstances differ considerably. Pre-Revolutionary Symbolism had already digested the Romantic idea of aesthetic transcendence, whereas the more secular expectations of post-Revolutionary literature are not necessarily less fantastical. Post-Revolutionary modernism increasingly challenges the model of aesthetic and spiritual transformation, but in a context where it was also possible to envisage interplanetary revolution and the scientific conquest of death.

This mythical aspect – Babel''s revelatory spatialism and the utopian undercurrents in Platonov and Zoshchenko – bears witness to the continuity of messianic culture. However, it is also interesting to note how Russia's positive, historically-emphasized point of resolution feeds into similar anxieties about time (doubts about progress and the existential problem of lacking a future End to believe in) to those which sprang from an intellectual end-condition in the West. The shift from *The Twelve* to *Red Cavalry* to *Chevengur*, from Frank toward Kermode, suggests a deconstruction of myth and a development in the direction of existentialism. Chapters three to five of *Before Sunrise* appear consistent with this trend, while reincorporating the aesthetic into a profane world. However, the second half of the book metamorphoses in line with the dogmatically enforced, anti-modernist, mythical culture of Stalinism. Wherever we position Zoshchenko, this underlines

the fact that we have reached a historical juncture at which trends in literary style and in responses to time no longer develop freely.

Parallels and Extensions

Having discussed the areas of correspondence and distinction between the theories and subject matter, and summarized what this has revealed about the chosen period and texts, we can explore how these conclusions might apply to other Russian authors of the modernist period.

Pre-Revolutionary Literature

This project has regrettably lacked the scope to examine modernism before 1917 in any depth. A dedicated study of that period would undoubtedly reveal more intricate relationships between fragmented form and time (and more complex attitudes to time and transformation) than it was possible to sketch in the first two chapters. This would probably strengthen the basis for the assumptions from which this project grew but also qualify some of the broad, inter-generational comparisons we have made. Deeper examination of Symbolism would be particularly desirable, for it is here that we find the clearest connections between formal innovation and the theurgic conception of artist involved in apocalyptic change. Symbolists also provide a wealth of theoretical writing which casts valuable light on their poetics and intentions. It would additionally be interesting to test the hypothesis made in the second chapter that Futurism transfers the aspirations of the symbol into the transformative metaphor, and thus develops the juxtapositional technique taken up by later prosaists such as Babel'. The avant-garde is also rich in theoretical material for a comprehensive prehistory to this project. The work of Khlebnikov in particular features a mass of references to the nature and mastery of time, which unfortunately presented too great a task for this project to approach even cursorily. On the other hand, Rozanov's *Fallen Leaves*, to which we alluded in the context of *Before Sunrise*, is a fragmentary text of the period that might disclose a more descriptive-modernist (Kermodian) element than we saw in the Symbolists examined in chapter two.

How contemporaries of the three selected writers fit in with our conclusions is a question of more immediate significance.

Mid-Apocalyptic Narrative

Concision has decreed that little more than allusions have been made to Pil'niak, although *The Naked Year* is a major reference point for the application of modernist styles to suggest the Revolution's elemental polyphony. Pil'niak is also an influential figure to take into account, both in terms of the acclaim earned by that novel and as a link in the evolutionary chain of Russian modernism, as Remizov's protégé and later an associate of Platonov.[14]

The relationship of *The Naked Year* to the spatial theory has been questioned by Carden, who claims that 'Pil'niak's work depicted chaos by being chaotic'.[15] We might indeed find that it lacks Babel''s magical unifications, because his narrator does not intervene to enact them. However, its exuberant montage suits the author's vision of the Revolution, influenced by the *skify*, as the blizzard of Russian destiny. This conception of a crisis in time chimes with the basic import of the spatial theory, linking temporal dislocations with myth. Whether readers perceive that the eschatological metanarrative unites *The Naked Year* into a coherent whole depends, rather as we saw in Belyi's *Second Symphony*, on their accepting that context. Aside from this potential area of distinction, Pil'niak lends weight to the claim, above, that the 'mid-apocalyptic' response concentrates on the breakthrough itself, and is therefore less haunted by 'what next?' questions. The cycles of nature and the theme of propagation are prominent, and appear perhaps more positive and unthreatening than in *Red Cavalry* (not to mention *Chevengur*).

A more comprehensive study of modernist texts written in the immediate aftermath of the Revolution could compare the treatment of these issues by Babel', Pil'niak, and Blok in *The Twelve*. Such an approach could include works by some of the authors briefly mentioned in chapter one, such as Vsevolod Ivanov's *Partizanskie povesti* [*Partisan Tales*] (1923), Konstantin Fedin's *Goroda i gody* [*Cities and Years*] (1924). A more conventional novel such as *Cement*, which applies the technique of modernist fragmentation in certain scenes, would serve as a useful comparison.

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[14] Greta N. Slobin, *Remizov's fictions, 1900-1921* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1991), p. 147.
[15] Carden, 'Ornamentalism', p. 62.

With regard to the issue of the development of the paradigm throughout the 1920s, it would be interesting to scrutinize the continuities and changes in Pil'niak's writing, which, like Babel''s, becomes less florid. One text of interest would be 'Krasnoe derevo' ['Mahogany'] (1929). Time is an important theme:

> Поезд уволакивал время в черные пространства полей. <...> Поезд волочил время, останавливая его перед станциями.
> [The train dragged off time into the black expanses of the fields... The train dragged time, leaving it in front of the stations.][16]

Time in 'Mahogany' is similarly 'pulled about' structurally. Like *The Naked Year*, it juxtaposes the Bolshevik present with glimpses of Old Rus – containing holy fools, as does its contemporary *Chevengur*.

Leonid Dobychin

Dobychin, who has belatedly begun to receive the scholarly attention his work deserves, is another writer who could be fruitfully studied with attention to ways in which his style expresses a relationship to time. As is the case with all the writers we have examined, Dobychin exhibits both the influence of Symbolism's transcendent aesthetics and an impulse to question and redefine that tradition. His central work, the short novel *The Town of N* (1935), presents a search for meaning amid the banality of *byt* through the aesthetic vision of the narrator from childhood to late adolescence. However, the reader is somewhat distanced from the narrator's spiritual raptures, for they result from his myopia: sometimes literally failing to see reality, and often quixotically misreading it. Dobychin's fragmentation also relies on the immature narrator, who lacks the ability to connect and order the phenomena of his world, and thus 'clumsily' juxtaposes laconic, desensitized sentences and produces an apparently unstructured narrative.

The narrator, who is not particularly aware of time, unwittingly merges linear and cyclical images of temporality (like Babel' and Platonov) by arbitrarily recording developments and repetitions. We trace the progression of history through the notable social and technological events that pierce his consciousness, and the reader knows that murmurs of unrest are the first crackles of the revolutionary conflagration destined to consume the depicted world around a decade after the

[16] Boris Pil'niak, *Povest' nepogashennoi luny: Rasskazy, povesti, roman*, ed. by B.B. Andronnikashvili-Pil'niak (Moscow: Pravda, 1990), p. 126.

narrative. At the same time, many aspects of life are essentially constant. Dobychin deploys recurring images of the banality, thoughtlessly accepted stereotypes and meanness that seem to reign supreme in his Gogolian-Sologubian provinces. Around a hundred characters appear at intervals, necessarily static caricatures in a novel of such brevity.[17] Funerals (numbering five), festivities and repeated references to season deepen the imprint of cyclical time. Consequently, the strictly linear chronological structure perhaps subverts rather than emphasizes the idea of unidirectional growth. This would suggest that, as in *Chevengur*, fragmentation – forming arbitrary, absurd sequences and recurrences – imparts a pessimistic view of time.[18] Viola Eidinova discusses the stylistic traits for which Dobychin was censured. 'Отсутствие переходов от одной мысли к другой' [a lack of transitions from one thought to another] corresponds with the aesthetic we find in all three case-study authors as well as others mentioned. However, 'мотив однообразия ("отсутствует шкала предметов, разница действительних величин")' [a motif of monotony ("there lacks a scale of things and differentiation of actual sizes")] suggests that this fragmentation has an ironic or negative charge.[19]

The narrator's incompetence and lack of narrative continuity does not suggest the ordering distance of spatialization, but rather an attitude of mocking dissociation from *byt* on the part of the author:

> Снег лег на булыжники. Сделалось тихо. Цецилию мы выгнали. Она поносила нашу религию, и это стало известно маман.'[20]
> [Snow lay down on the cobblestones. It became quiet. We threw out Cecilia. She had reviled our religion, and that became known to Maman.]

However, one of the ironies in *The Town of N* is that the narrator's short-sightedness makes him more of an artist than those around him. His awkward juxtapositions can be moving and comical, and expose subtle tensions, rather as Babel''s *skaz* narrator's and (with sophistication) Liutov do. In the above example,

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[17] See Richard Borden, 'Introduction', in Leonid Dobychin, *The Town of N*, trans. by Richard Borden and Natalia Belova (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1998), pp. vii-xxvi (p. xii).

[18] Linguistic and syntactic similarities between Dobychin and Platonov have also been identified. See Viola Eidinova, 'A. Platonov i L. Dobychin: Stilevye skhozhdeniia i ottalkivaniia', in *'Strana filosofov' Andreia Platonova: problemy tvorchestva*, vol 5, ed. by N.V. Kornienko (Moscow: Imli Ran, 2003), pp. 211-19.

[19] Viola Eidinova, 'O stile Dobychina', in *Pisatel' Leonid Dobychin: Vospominaniia. Stat'i. Pis'ma*, ed. by Vladimir Bakhtin (St Petersburg: Zhurnal Zvezda, 1995), pp. 101-16.

[20] Leonid Dobychin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii i pisem*, ed. by V. Bakhtin (St Petersburg: Zhurnal 'Zvezda', 1999), p. 115.

there is the bathos of lyrical impressions succeeded by the uncritical report of adult sectarian intolerance. (Cecilia is one of a series of sacked maids.) In addition, Dobychin manipulates time and perspective in a remarkable manner. The first two sentences suggest the individual's momentary perceptions; the following two are consequentially unrelated news events.

At the end of the novel there is a certain revelation: the narrator's myopia is diagnosed and his sight corrected. His view of the tragic world is now clear, and he can launch into adulthood free of false illusions about the fallen world. The reader is not granted an insight into the subsequent consequences of this transformation of vision. However, it potentially provides the narratorial perspective of retrospective contemplation of a body of text that Babel' has and Platonov lacks.

Dobychin's short stories contrast with *The Town of N* by depicting reality in bleaker colours. Their more conventional narrators construct an 'aesthetic present', perhaps even a spatially timeless one, but it is emphatically non-transcendent. (The most suitable comparison would be with the alienated distance and extreme economy of Zoshchenko's fragments.) Dobychin's stories and novel would therefore be an interesting case for study of the interrelationship between Frank and Kermode, as well as a further example of the evolution of Russian modernism away from its roots in religious myth.

Daniil Kharms

Examination of Kharms (and some of his OBERIU associates) would also constitute a valuable addition to this area of study. Though idiosyncratic, Kharms embodies several key aspects discussed in this thesis. His textual experimentation is closely connected with existential, philosophical enquiry, and there are clear relationships with Symbolist ideas about art and a strong eschatologism.[21] However, Kharms treats the concept of the poet-prophet with irony, and if his absurd sequences and attraction to supernatural themes give works such as 'Starukha' ['The Hag'] (1939) a timeless impact with apocalyptic connotations, the dark vein

[21] On apocalyptic aspects see D.V. Tokarev, 'Apokalipticheskie motivy v tvorchestve D. Kharmsa (V kontekste russkoi i evropeiskoi eskhatologii)', in *Rossiia, zapad, vostok: Vstrechnye techeniia*, ed. by V.E. Bagno, et al. (St Petersburg: Nauka, 1996), pp. 176-97, and L.F. Katsis, 'Erotika 1910-kh i eskhatologiia oberiutov', *Literaturnoe obozrenie*, 9-10 (1994), 57-63.

running through them implies that it should be read in the context of the age of the Antichrist, not of divine revelation.[22]

His best-known prose work, the series of *Sluchai* [*Incidents*] written 1933-39, features a number of anti-plots with recurring patterns or self-negating structures. Physical death (often sudden) is a common theme, but in the context of Kharms's latent religiosity the corruptibility of flesh seems to predicate a distinct realm, in contrast to Platonov, for example. The theme also resonates with the horrors of the mid- to late-thirties, which the author must have known he was unlikely to survive.

The influence of and divergence from Symbolism is exemplified by two 'symphonies' parodying Belyi, to which we alluded in the second chapter. The first is the 29th of his *Incidents*: 'Nachalo ochen' khoroshego letnego dnia: simfoniia' ['The Beginning of a Very Nice Summer's Day: A Symphony'] (1939):

> Чуть только прокричал петух, Тимофей выскочил из окошка на улицу и напугал всех, кто проходил в это время по улице. Крестьянин Харитон остановился, поднял камень и пустил им в Тимофея. Тимофей куда-то исчез. «Вот ловкач!» – закричало человеческое стадо, и некто Зубов разбежался и со всего маху двинулся головой о стенку. «Эх!» – вскрикнула баба с флюсом. Но Комаров сделал этой бабе тепель-тапель, и баба с воем убежала в подворотню. Мимо шел Фетелюшин и посмеивался. К нему подошел Комаров и сказал: «Эй ты, сало!» – и ударил Фетелюшина по животу. Фетелюшин прислонился к стене и начал икать. Ромашкин плевался сверху из окна, стараясь попасть в Фетелюшина. Тут же невдалеке носатая баба била корытом своего ребенка. А молодая толстенькая мать терла хорошенькую девочку лицом о кирпичную стенку. Маленькая собачка, сломав тоненькую ножку, валялась на панели. Маленький мальчик ел из плевательницы какую-то гадость. У бакалейного магазина стояла очередь за сахаром. Бабы громко ругались и толкали друг друга кошелками. Крестьянин Харитон, напившись денатурата, стоял перед бабами с расстегнутыми штанами и произносил нехорошие слова.
> Таким образом начинался хороший летний день.[23]
> [No sooner had the cock crowed, Timofei sprung out of his window onto the street and frightened everyone who was passing along the street at that time. The peasant Khariton stopped, picked up a stone and threw it at Timofei. Timofei disappeared somewhere. "What a dodger!" shouted the human herd, and a certain Zubov took a run up and with all his might struck his head against a wall. "Ekh!" cried a woman with a gumboil. But Komarov gave the woman a good biff-baff and the woman ran away under a gate. Feteliushin walked by and laughed. Komarov went up to him and said, "Hey you, lard-arse!" and punched Feteliushin in the belly. Feteliushin leaned against the wall and began hiccupping. Romashkin spat out of a window above, trying to hit Feteliushin. Not far away a big-nosed woman was beating her child with a trough. And a plump young mother was rubbing a nice little girl against a brick wall. A small dog, having broken his slender leg, was lying about on the pavement. A little boy was eating some sort of filth out of a spittoon. At the grocery shop there was a

[22] Daniil Kharms, *Daniil Kharms*, ed. by A. Avdeev, 2 vols (Moscow: Viktori, 1994), I, 297-316.
[23] Ibid., I, 292.

queue for sugar. The women cursed loudly and pushed one another with their handbags. The peasant Khariton, drunk on methylated spirits, stood before the women with his trousers unbuttoned and pronounced bad words.
Thus began a nice summer day.]

The second, a free-standing text, is entitled 'Simfoniia № 2' ['Symphony no. 2'] and dated June 1941:

Антон Михайлович плюнул, сказал «ех», опять плюнул, опять сказал «ех», опять плюнул, опять сказал «ех» и ушел. И бог с ним. Расскажу лучше про Илью Павловича.
Илья Павлович родился в 1893 году, в Константинополе. Еще маленьким мальчиком его перевезли в Петербург, и тут он окончил немецкую школу на Кирочной улице. Потом он служил в каком-то магазине, потом еще что-то делал, а в начале революции эмигрировал за границу. Ну и бог с ним. Я лучше расскажу про Анну Игнатьеву.
Но про Анну Игнатьеву рассказать не так-то просто. Во-первых, я о ней ничего не знаю, а во-вторых, я сейчас упал со стула и забыл, о чем собирался рассказывать. Я лучше расскажу о себе.
Я высокого роста, неглупый, одеваюсь изящно и со вкусом, не пью, на скачки не хожу, но к дамам тянусь. И дамы не избегают меня. Даже любят, когда я с ними гуляю. Серафима Измайловна неоднократно приглашала меня к себе, и Зинаида Яковлевна тоже говорила, что она всегда рада меня видеть. Но вот с Мариной Петровной у меня вышел забавный случай, о котором я хочу рассказать. Случай вполне обыкновенный, но все же забавный, ибо Марина Петровна благодаря меня совершенно обдысела, как ладонь. Случилось это так: пришел я однажды к Марине Петровне, а она трах! – и облысела. Вот и все.[24]
[Anton Mikhailovich spat, said "ekh", spat again, again said "ekh", spat again, again said "ekh" and left. And good luck to him. I'd better tell you about Il'ia Pavlovich.
Il'ia Pavlovich was born in 1893 in Constantinople. Still a small boy, he was taken to Petersburg, and there he graduated from the German school on Kirochnaia Street. Then he worked in some shop, then he did something else, and at the beginning of the revolution he emigrated. Well, good luck to him. I'd better tell you about Anna Ignat'eva.
But talking about Anna Ignat'eva is not so simple. Firstly, I don't know anything about here and, secondly, I have just fallen off my chair and forgotten what I was intending to say. I'd better tell you about myself.
I am tall, clever, I dress elegantly and with taste, I don't drink, don't go to the races, but am attracted to the ladies. And the ladies don't avoid me either. They even like it when I go out with them. Serafima Izmailovna repeatedly invited me to her house, and Zinaida Iakovlevna also said she is always glad to see me. But with Marina Petrovna there was a funny incident I want to relate. The incident is completely ordinary but still funny, for Marina Petrovna became totally bald, like the palm of a hand, thanks to me. This is how it happened: once I came to Marina Petrovna and she – bang! – and went bald. That's that.]

The first of these wickedly sends up Belyi's urban collage. Where the Symbolist had aspired to reveal the 'musical' patterns in the polyphony of the city, the *oberiut* demystifies, exaggerating worldly depravity and the non-transcendent in *byt*. The second is a self-defeating narrative, underlining its own pointlessness. Even when it

[24] Ibid., II, 112-13.

seems to finally stumble across a subject, the narration consists in no more than stating a fact. Marina Petrovna's balding is a supernatural transformation caused by the author, but of a sort – associated neither with poetic agency nor with religious ramifications – unimaginable in a Symbolist text. Both 'symphonies' demonstrate an ironic attitude to the ambition of turning fragments into significant patterns, and seem to explore the possibility that formlessness really is random and meaningless. In terms of Kharms's 'sense of ending', we could read this stance both as a sardonic response to the putative state of social perfection and as a philosophical statement rejecting the absolutes so prevalent in Russian discourse. Kharms might therefore provide another example of a shift from Frank to Kermode, towards a modernism that increasingly holds common ground with postmodernism. Indeed, this would be consistent with Graham Roberts's more general conclusions about the OBERIU.[25]

Beyond Post-Revolutionary Modernism

Investigating Pil'niak, Dobychin and Kharms in depth would provide us with a fuller picture of the post-Revolutionary period and the trends tentatively drawn from the three case studies. There are other texts that could be illuminated by the theoretical approach of this thesis, although they do not belong to the particular story that has been told here. With Zoshchenko, this project has reached a period in which the Soviet state actively suppressed modernist tendencies, and the distinction between publishable and desk-drawer literature becomes increasingly significant. A future study could compare respective attitudes toward end-discourse in official and underground literature and, like this study, examine how these approaches are reflected in style and structure.

Socialist Realism is in many respects an inversion of our paradigm and examples. It marks a 'return' to broadly linear narratives (within realist conventions), in which plot resolution mirrors social transformation. This may be achieved either by replaying moments of Revolutionary breakthrough or presenting microcosms of transformation, for instance in the construction novel. Nevertheless, these differences could perhaps be shown to confirm some of Frank's and Kermode's assertions. Stalinist hostility to 'formalism' is in line with Worringer's thesis that

[25] Graham Roberts, *The Last Soviet Avant-Garde: OBERIU – Fact, Fiction, Metafiction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 176.

abstraction springs from worldly alienation. A realist style would thus be a logical response to the belief in history's resolution and perfection (one recalls Zoshchenko's formula of absolute health as the ideal for art, and his association of modernism with sickness). It could also be shown to display that devotion to cant, and thus to conventional structures, of which Kermode so disapproves.

At the other end of the spectrum are works such as Bulgakov's *The Master and Margarita* (1940) and Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago* (1957), which challenge the new orthodoxies (as a result of which neither exist in print before the Thaw). Both of these novels reengage with a sense of aesthetic transformation on an apocalyptic background. Speaking in the context of Abrams's work on Romanticism and the French Revolution, David Bethea proposes that 'for Russian apocalypticists like Bulgakov and Pasternak, who wrote after 1917 and who had to make sense of the revolution's excesses and failings, this same shift to a personal eschatology and to an artistic, as opposed to a political, revisioning of reality is readily apparent.'[26] We might qualify Bethea's statement insofar as 'artistic eschatology' represents a continuity from earlier strands of Russian modernism. However, his emphasis on personal revisioning, without an equivalent transformation of the outside world, does suggest a fundamental shift in the parameters of the discourse. In comparison to the texts that have been considered in this project, the stance Bethea describes would signify a rehabilitation of art as a means to transform, yet without restoring the Symbolists' solid religious basis for the aesthetic.

Bulgakov's and Pasternak's 'senses of end' are also accompanied by a polyphonic breadth that cuts across their novels' narrative linearity. They are not High Modernists and do not juxtapose sufficiently small 'units of meaning', as Frank puts it, to bring about the sort of spatiality that can only be comprehended as a retrospective whole. However, as Gasparov's article (mentioned in the first chapter) argues, reading *Doctor Zhivago* as an abstract, musical entity, and its coincidences and repetitions as elements of its counterpoint, does enrich our appreciation of the work. [27] We come to see the novel's baggy form in terms of a pattern invisible to

[26] David Bethea, *The Shape of Apocalypse in Modern Russian Fiction* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 38.
[27] Boris Gasparov, 'Temporal Counterpoint as a Principle of Formation in *Doctor Zhivago*', in *Doctor Zhivago: A Critical Companion*, ed. by Edith W. Clowes (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1995), pp. 89-114.

the humans inside it, and not fastened to the linear time by which they live. *The Master and Margarita*, in terms of the structure of parallel narratives, might be considered no more modernist than *Anna Karenina*. However, the thematics of Bulgakov's masterpiece strongly affect our perception of the structure. The disparateness of contemporary Moscow, Christ's Jerusalem and the eternal realm inhabited by Woland, the apocalyptic connotations of this juxtaposition, and the author's 'prophetic' ability to freely move between them encourage a qualified comparison with the spatial paradigm. The respective strata of time assume a sort of simultaneity through analogy (for example, the device of the overlapping ends / beginnings of chapters) and narrative convergence. Thus although the visceral effect is not as Frank describes, Bulgakov exploits similar, multidimensional dynamics on a grander scale to produce a 'timelessness' which the reader perhaps appreciates more intellectually and symbolically.

The resonance of Bulgakov's timeless realm is perhaps more ethical and less cosmological than that of works more directly derived from the Symbolist tradition. *The Master and Margarita* contrasts the eternity of the imagination and ideas with the crude dogma of the perfected society. This ideological aspect suggests another angle for future studies. Where it satirizes the notion of a socialist paradise, *The Master and Margarita* is drawing on an established theme. One recalls Zoshchenko's stories of the early twenties, exposing earthly realities and depicting the new world's untransformed individuals. The following passage from Il'ia Il'f's and Evgenii Petrov's *Zolotoi telenok* [*The Golden Calf*] (1931) mocks the notion of a Soviet Paradise (albeit putting the words in the mouth of a reactionary foreigner):

> Был, господа, в Москве молодой человек, комсомолец. Звали его – Адам. И была молодая девушка, комсомолка Ева. И вот эти молодые люди отправились однажды погулять в московский рай – в Парк культуры и отдыха. Не знаю, о чем они там беседовали. У нас обычно молодые люди беседуют о любви. Но ваши Адам и Ева были марксисты и, возможно, говорили о всемирной революции.[28]
> [There was in Moscow, gentlemen, once a young man, a *komsomolets*. He was called Adam. And there was a young woman, *komsomolka* Eve. Once upon a time these youngsters set off for a walk in Muscovite paradise – in the Park of Culture and Leisure. I don't know what they spoke about. In our country young people usually talk about love. But your Adam and Eve were Marxists and possibly spoke about worldwide revolution.]

Eventually, we learn, Adam and Eve have two sons, and name them Cain and Abel.

[28] Il'ia Il'f and Evgenii Petrov, *Zolotoi telenok* (Izhevsk: Udmurtiia, 1976), p. 256.

This project has alluded to Zamiatin's essay 'Paradise' and his dystopian *We*, and seen the utopian subject treated ironically by Platonov. A study concentrating on satirical and sceptical visions of 'new time' would enable us to test how far the case-study texts exist within a broader tendency toward ironizing the myth.

Methodological Review

We can close this final chapter by briefly reassessing the scope and inherent limitations of a study exploring the interaction between fragmentation and content, a question especially pertinent to the future projects envisaged above.

As foreseen in the introductory chapter, any search for meaning in abstract form encounters the problem of objectively demonstrating what the individual reader, listener or observer subjectively finds suggestive. Furthermore, the formal aspect of literature can never be satisfactorily isolated: even removed from a comprehensible context, a word is not abstract. One is thus compelled to take into account how linguistic meanings affect the reader's reception of fragmentation. Yet this presents a danger of employing circular logic. If the meaning of form relies on content, we can perhaps attain the same signification without involving form, and therefore do so in a less speculative fashion. Such difficulties and tensions are inevitable, and particularly hard to resolve when generalizations about something as broad as modernism are envisaged, as the Frank-Kermode controversy illustrates.

This thesis has not sought to identify concrete meanings in pure form, but to explore interrelationships between thematic contexts and structural and stylistic effects. Despite the shortcomings described in the previous paragraph, these aspects are so crucial to the impact of a text – especially in modernism, and especially with regard to the representation of time – that such relationships demand to be examined.

Had we aspired to a more formalistic approach, we could have formulated typologies of fragmentation (for instance, categories of narratorial distance or involvement, and scales of heterogeneity). However, this would have merely reduced aspects of content to abstract concepts, without extricating us from the need to read form through the influence of content. Furthermore, constructing such templates might have hindered interaction with the distinctive facets of a given text. On the other hand, certain embryonic 'rules' of spatialization have emerged from

this experience, and these could prove useful both to general studies of fragmentation and to some of the related areas outlined in the previous section. We have discovered factors that make fragmentation more or less 'spatial', particularly those from which authorial intention can be inferred: the extent to which the narrator relates fragments to a unified meaning, the nature of that interpretation, and how relevant cultural contexts are treated.

Frank and Kermode draw extensively on their respective conceptions of Western relationships to time when they present their differing views of textual timelessness. The specificity of the Russian experience underlines the importance of such contextual information to overarching formal generalizations about fragmentation and time. The period is characterized by apocalyptic traditions merging with Marxism, traumatic historical upheavals, and the consciousness of becoming the world's first communist state. It is an epoch of transitions and discontinuities. The cataclysmic combination of belief and doubt, destruction and creation, imparts intensity and ambivalence to the experience of time in post-Revolutionary Russia. It is hoped that by exploring form and content in parallel this project has demonstrated interconnections between them, and thus revealed a significant stylistic dimension to modernist responses to time after the Revolution.

However, it is the richness and subtlety of the different authors' individual responses to common contexts that makes close reading and a flexible attitude to theoretical hypotheses the most rewarding method. Each text brims with an awareness of the disparities between religious eschatology and utopianism, and each writer distils this into a fragmented personal vision. *Red Cavalry* offers us 'the Song of Songs and revolver cartridges', *Before Sunrise* juxtaposes Blok's crisis with the worship of Reason, and *Chevengur* portrays the attempt to modify old symbols to suit new requirements:

> кресты Гопнер нашел годными для шпунта, если снять с них перекладины и головки Иисуса Христа.[29]
> [Gopner found the crosses suitable for rabbets, if one removed the cross-pieces and heads of Jesus Christ].

[29] Andrei Platonov, *Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh*, ed. by V. Chalmaev (Moscow: Informpechat', 1998), I, 263.

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